



Club Safeguarding Guide¹



Section 1: Club & Volunteer Responsibilities in Age Grade Rugby

Section 2: Club Action Plan

Section 3: Club Welfare Officer Getting to Know Your Role

Section 4: Sample Noticeboard

Section 5: Notes

¹ Updated 25/26 Season

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1: Club & Volunteer Responsibilities in Age Grade Rugby

All clubs offering rugby to children & young people need to:



Adhere to the IRFU Safeguarding Policy



Appoint a Club Welfare Officer (CWO)



Make clear what the club ethos is



Ensure coaches & volunteers have been safely recruited



Give coaches the opportunity to attend relevant training



Ensure that everyone has access & adheres to the Codes 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



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



Strive to create a physically & emotionally safe environment



Ensure players & coaches are properly registered on RugbyConnect



Signpost to/seek guidance from expert organisations if needed

All coaches² working with children & young people need to:



Adhere to the IRFU
Safeguarding Policy



Sign the Declaration of
Intent



Complete the vetting
process before starting



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 We use the term '**coach**' when someone is 'working' with a team, however you may have other names or roles such as 'helper', 'assistant', 'manager', etc., but nonetheless you are taking some responsibility for supporting the development of children and young people.

2: Club Action Plan

All clubs offering rugby to children & young people have specific responsibilities to create a safe and positive environment in which players can enjoy rugby safely. For further information go to **Section 1: Club and Volunteer Responsibilities – Age Grade Rugby**



The Club Welfare Officer (CWO) will co-ordinate this work, supported by other members of the club. **See Section 3: Club Welfare Officer - Getting to Know Your Role**

Club Season Plan

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

Start of Season

- CWO briefing, SG1 & SG2 training
- Safeguarding Risk Assessment & Child Safeguarding Statement
- Parent & coach briefings
- Coach & volunteer registration, vetting & safeguarding training (SG1)
- Player registration & permissions

Mid Season

- SG3 training
- Sharing best practice, advice & guidance
- Supporting the voice of the player to be heard in the club
- Encouraging parental involvement

End of Season

- Sport Ireland Audit
- Succession planning

Appointing a Club Welfare Officer/Deputy (CWO)



Completed (✓)



- The CWO **must** be in place before any age-grade activities start <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/>

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



- If possible, the club should appoint a Deputy CWO too.



- The CWO **must** complete the vetting process

<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/recruitment/>

- The CWO **must** attend relevant training, including the CWO briefing and safeguarding training
<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/training/>
(SG1 & SG2 must be completed shortly after taking up role. SG3 should be completed when offered (usually mid-season). All safeguarding training must be renewed every 3 years.)
- 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
<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/>

Safeguarding Risk Assessment & Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS)



- Clubs are **required** to carry out a **Safeguarding Risk Assessment** and sign and publish their **Child Safeguarding Statement** (CSS) (*noticeboard, website, social media platforms, parent & coach briefings*) as a result
<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/>
- These **must** be uploaded to RugbyConnect by mid-October every year.
*These are live documents and should be reviewed every 2 years in line with the IRFU Safeguarding Review. Templates will be provided by the Spirit of Rugby Officer, although clubs **must** ensure that statements are specific to their circumstances. Throughout the 2 years, clubs must be active in ensuring the identified actions are carried out.*

Completed
(✓)



Parent & Coach Briefings



- Parent & coach briefings are a great way to communicate important information at the start of the season. How this is done is up to the club, it could be a presentation at club registration or an information evening, or it could be sent out in short bursts through the club's social media platforms.

Completed
(✓)



Templates are available from the Spirit of Rugby Officer which give guidance on the type of information to share including Expectations, Codes of Conduct, Role of the Parent/Coach, Reporting Procedures.

Coach & Volunteer Registration



- Clubs must ensure appropriate supervision levels for teams through recruitment of coaches and other volunteers
<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/>
- All coaches and volunteers **must** have an active **registration** with the club before they start and must be panelled to the team that they are working with
This means that they have been approved by the club for membership purposes and can complete their vetting through RugbyConnect <https://rugbyconnect.irfu.ie/>
- The CWO will need to work with the Club Registrar (or be approved as a Registrar) to be able to see/approve memberships.

Completed



Coach & Volunteer Vetting



- All coaches and volunteers **must** have an active RugbyConnect **Vetting Credential** with the club before they start <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/recruitment/>
This means that they have been vetted by the IRFU through the Garda Vetting/Access NI systems and a decision has been made on the suitability of the applicant based on the information provided.
This does not negate the responsibility of the clubs to carry out an appropriate selection process, including taking up references.
- The CWO's role in this process is to verify the vetting credential for each applicant ensuring that it meets the requirements of the Garda Vetting/Access NI processes
- Vetting will be renewed every 3 years in line with the Spirit of Rugby Vetting Policy.

Completed



Coach & Volunteer Safeguarding Training



- All coaches and volunteers **must** complete relevant safeguarding training before they start <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/training/>
- Training should be renewed every 3 years in line with the Spirit of Rugby training guidance for clubs.

Completed

(✓)

Player Registration & Permissions



- Clubs need to gather parental consent to participate in club activities including relevant medical/behavioural information. This should be done through RugbyConnect <https://rugbyconnect.irfu.ie/>
- Clubs can choose to add to the questions recommended by the IRFU if they wish. This should be done when the memberships are being set up each season.
- Safeguarding information should be made available on sign up so that parents & players know standards of behaviour expected <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/>
- Medical/behavioural information needs to be downloaded from RugbyConnect & shared with the relevant coaches

Completed

(✓)

Sharing Best Practice, Advice & Guidance



- There is a lot of information to share with parents, coaches and players. CWOs should be able to give practical advice, support and signpost to relevant policies, procedures and guidance.
- CWOs should develop a good working relationship with the Branch Spirit of Rugby Officer and familiarise themselves with the Spirit of Rugby section of the IRFU website <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/>
- Clubs should ensure that there is an up-to-date section on their noticeboards and website dedicated to safeguarding information <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/>

Completed

(✓)

- Information should be available in a variety of formats to allow for the inclusion of young people with a disability etc
The Safeguarding Risk Assessment will specify the information that needs to be shared, especially around reporting a concern.
- The CWO will need to work closely with the age-grade committees, convenors/co-ordinators, coaches & volunteers to ensure all of those working with children & young people have up-to-date information.
- The CWO will work with the age-grade committees, convenors/co-ordinators, coaches & volunteers to share relevant information on nutrition and concussion etc
<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/nutrition/>
<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/medical/>

Supporting the Voice of the Player



Completed
(✓)

- The CWO will influence policy in relation to age-grade players by sitting on the Executive/Management Committee or by having access to meetings.
- The CWO will need to work closely with the age-grade convenors/co-ordinators to implement policies, procedures and practices that are in the best interests of age-grade players <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/>
- The CWO will ensure that they are well-known to age-grade players and approachable should they wish to raise an issue <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/>
- The CWO should actively listen to the voice of children & young people within the club by hosting youth consultations and linking with the IRFU Youth Council (& provincial forums) <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/youth-council/>
- The CWO should directly involve young people to help spread welfare messages across the club, including the Codes of Conduct, Anti-Bullying Statement and Social Media policies <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/>

- Speak to players when they are leaving, about the reasons for leaving. Try to spot trends and/or potential harmful issues that might arise from poor coaching or team practices.

Encouraging Parental Involvement



- Clubs should encourage the involvement of parents in club activities. Gather information from parents about skills, knowledge & experience they have that could contribute to the club or write up a list of tasks where help is needed and circulate this to parents.

Sport Ireland Audit



- Clubs are required to complete the Sport Ireland Audit, as directed by Spirit of Rugby staff.
The Audit is a key priority for Sport Ireland, and full compliance with the process is required to ensure compliance with Sport Ireland's Safeguarding programme and continuation of funding.
A guide to completing the Audit will be provided by the Spirit of Rugby Officer.

Succession Planning



- Clubs should actively plan for volunteers moving on from their roles, identifying potential new volunteers to fill roles as soon as possible. Ideally this should be done so that those currently in the role can help with handing over the role to the new volunteer.
- Clubs should talk to volunteers when they finish in their role and where necessary make changes to the roles of volunteers, training and/or support they receive.

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Completed



Completed



Completed





3: Club Welfare Officer Getting to Know Your Role

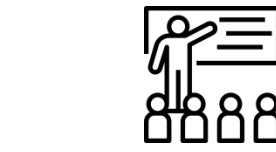
All clubs offering rugby to children & young people have specific responsibilities to create a safe and positive environment in which players can enjoy rugby safely. For further information go to **Section 1: Club and Volunteer Responsibilities – Age Grade Rugby**



To ensure that these responsibilities are being carried out, the club **must** appoint a Club Welfare Officer (CWO) who will co-ordinate this work. If possible, the club should appoint a Deputy CWO too. Upon taking up the role, the CWO/Deputy **must**:



Complete the vetting process



Attend relevant training, including safeguarding



Display the CWO poster with up-to-date contacts

<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/recruitment/>

<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/training/>

<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/>

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Themes

The key activities can also be broken down into 3 main themes, although they all work together to help the club to create a safe and positive environment for players that meets legislative requirements and good practice standards:

Compliance

- CWO briefing, SG1 & SG2 training
- Safeguarding Risk Assessment & Child Safeguarding Statement
- Coach & volunteer registration, vetting & safeguarding training
- Player registration & permissions
- Sport Ireland Audit
- Succession planning

Advice

- Parent & coach briefings
- Sharing best practice, advice & guidance
- Encouraging parental involvement

Child-Centred Ethos

- SG3 training
- Supporting the voice of the player to be heard in the club

Support

As the main point of contact for all safeguarding matters within the club you will be supported by the relevant Branch Spirit of Rugby Officer:

- Laura Scuffil (Connacht) – laura.scuffil@connachtrugby.ie
- Billy Phelan (Leinster) – billy.phelan@leinsterrugby.ie
- Emily O'Leary (Munster) – emilyoleary@munsterrugby.ie
- Kerry Spence (Ulster) – kerry.spence@ulsterrugby.com

For further information and resources go to **Section 2: Club Action Plan**

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4: Sample Noticeboard

There is a lot of information to share with parents, coaches and players. 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 Risk Assessment



Child Safeguarding Statement



Code of Conduct Parents



Codes of Conduct Players



Anti-Bullying Statement



IRFU Safeguarding Policy



Reporting Procedures



Information about Training Courses

Links to IRFU Website

Safeguarding Policy

<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/safeguarding-policy/>

Best Practice

<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/>

Recruitment

<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/recruitment/>

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Information for Parents & Guardians

<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/parents-guardians/>

What to do if you have a Concern

<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/concerns/>

Information for Young People

<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/young-people/>

Information about Training Courses

<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/training/>

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5: Notes

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