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Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP.



**POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR THE
WELFARE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN RUGBY UNION**



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FOREWORD

The RFU and RFUW have a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for young people, coaches and volunteers provide them with the highest possible standard of care.

Through the implementation of a policy for the Welfare of Young People in Rugby, and the support of its coaches and volunteers, the RFU/RFUW alongside a growing number of governing bodies, will maintain the professionalism and safeguards of good practice which are associated with the game.

The policy outlines the following key areas:

- It recognises the responsibility of all those involved in Rugby Union (professional and volunteers) to safeguard and promote the interests and well being of the children and young players with whom they are working;
- It provides a framework on the recruitment, selection, suitability and deployment of individuals working with young people;
- It emphasises the value of working closely in partnership with other coaches, parents, professionals and volunteers to protect children and young players from harm and discrimination;
- It acknowledges that abuse does take place in sport and that raising awareness and understanding of the main forms of abuse and establishing communication and reporting procedures if abuse is suspected will further safeguard the young players, coaches and all others working within the game.

Please note the following:

This policy is to be applied to all young players who are Under 18. Within the RFU regulations, a male player is permitted to play in the adult game when he reaches his 17th birthday. In these circumstances, sections 13.2.5 and 13.3.3 of this policy cannot practically be applied. However, those responsible for the management of adult teams which include 17 year old players must, at all times, be mindful of their safety and well being.

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 It is the responsibility of every adult working in rugby union, whether as a professional or a volunteer, to ensure that all young people can enjoy the sport in a safe enjoyable environment.
- 1.2 The RFU/RFUW recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all young people involved in the game by protecting them from physical, emotional or sexual harm and from neglect or bullying of any kind.
- 1.3 The RFU/RFUW is resolute in meeting its obligation to ensure that all clubs and Constituent Bodies and schools providing playing opportunities for young people do so to the highest possible standards of care. The policy and procedures apply to all those who are subject to the jurisdiction of the RFU/RFUW whether in a paid or voluntary capacity.
- 1.4 The members of the RFU/ RFUW recognise that they have a responsibility:
 - 1.4.1 To safeguard and promote the interests and well-being of young people with whom they are working.
 - 1.4.2 To ensure that all adults who work with young people are aware of their role and responsibilities and that training opportunities are made available to them.
 - 1.4.3 To take all reasonable practical steps to protect young people from harm, discrimination or degrading treatment.
 - 1.4.4 To respect young peoples' rights, reasonable wishes and feelings.
 - 1.4.5 To take all reasonable steps to ensure that individuals involved in the game are aware of situations which may compromise their responsibility or position
- 1.5 Procedures laid down in this policy will:
 - 1.5.1 Offer safeguards to the young people with whom we work, and to our professional members of staff and volunteer coaches and club members.
 - 1.5.2 Help to maintain the professionalism and the safeguards of good practice which are associated with the RFU/RFUW.

It is recognised that any procedure is only as effective as the ability and skill of those who operate it. The RFU/RFUW are therefore committed to the effective recruitment, and appropriate training for all our professional staff, coaches, volunteers and club members. This will enable them to work together with parents/carers and other organisations to ensure that the needs and the welfare of young people remain paramount.

SECTION 2 - KEY PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 Anyone under the age of 18 should be considered as a young person for the purposes of this document.
- 2.2 The welfare of all young people is paramount.
- 2.3 All young people, whatever their age, gender, culture, ability, language, religious beliefs, racial origin, and/or sexual identity should be able to enjoy the game in a fun environment, safe from abuse of any kind.
- 2.4 It is the responsibility of child protection experts to determine whether abuse has taken place, but it is everyone's responsibility within rugby union to report concerns.
- 2.5 All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- 2.6 Constituent Bodies, clubs, Academies and schools will be provided with appropriate documentation, training and support to ensure that they are able to implement RFU/RFUW policy.
- 2.7 Individuals working with young people will be made aware of good practice in order to ensure that they are not placed in situations where allegations could be made.
- 2.8 Working in partnership with parents/carers is essential for the protection of young people.
- 2.9 RFU/RFUW recognises the statutory responsibilities of Social Services departments and the police to ensure the welfare of young people and is committed to complying with Local Area Child Protection Committee procedures.

SECTION 3 LEGAL AND PROCEDURAL FRAMEWORK

The practices and procedures within this policy are based on the principles contained within UK and international legislation and government guidance and have been designed to complement Local Area Child Protection Committee procedures and take the following into consideration:

- 3.1.1 *The Children Act 1989;*
- 3.1.2 *The Protection of Children Act 1999;*
- 3.1.3 *Working Together to Safeguard Children and Young People 1999;*
- 3.1.4 *“Caring for the Young and Vulnerable”- Home Office Guidance for Preventing the Abuse of Trust 1999;*
- 3.1.5 *The Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000;*
- 3.1.6 *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;*
- 3.1.7 *The Human Rights Act 1998;*
- 3.1.8 *“What to do if you are worried a child may be being abused” - DOH 2003.*

SECTION 4 RECOGNISING ABUSE IN RUGBY UNION

Abuse is a powerful and emotive term. It is a term used to describe ways in which children are harmed, usually by individuals and often by those they know and trust. **Coaches and others working with young people hold this trust and may be at risk of misusing their power over the young players.**

In order to provide young people with the best possible experiences and opportunities in rugby union, it is imperative that everyone operates within an accepted ethical framework and demonstrates exemplary behaviour. This not only ensures that rugby union makes a positive contribution to the development of young people and safeguards their welfare, but also protects all personnel from false allegations of abuse or poor practice.

It is not always easy to differentiate poor practice from abuse, albeit intentional or unintentional. It is not, therefore, the responsibility of employees or volunteers in rugby union to determine whether or not abuse is taking place. **It is, however, their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and to act if they have a concern about the welfare of a young person.**

(See Section 13 to reference “Good Practice in the Rugby Setting”)

There may also be an increased risk within many sports, including rugby union, for abuse to occur which does not necessarily fit into these categories.

The four main types of abuse are:

4.1 EMOTIONAL ABUSE

This occurs when individuals persistently fail to show young people due care, love or affection, where a young person may be constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted, or be subjected to sarcasm and unrealistic pressures. There may also be over protection, preventing young people from socialising, or bullying to perform to high expectations. The young person may lose self-confidence and may become withdrawn and nervous.

In a rugby situation, emotional abuse may occur when coaches:

- 4.1.1 Provide repeated negative feedback;
- 4.1.2 Repeatedly ignore a young player's efforts to progress;
- 4.1.3 Repeatedly demand performance levels above those of which the young player is capable;
- 4.1.4 Over-emphasise the winning ethic.

4.2 ABUSE BY NEGLECT

This occurs when a young person's essential needs for food, warmth and care fail to be met. Failing to or refusing to provide love and affection could also be deemed as neglect.

In a rugby situation, neglect may occur when:

- 4.2.1 Young players are left alone without proper supervision;
- 4.2.2 A young player is exposed to unnecessary heat or cold without fluids or protection;
- 4.2.3 A young player is exposed to an unacceptable risk of injury.

4.3 PHYSICAL ABUSE

This occurs when individuals, including some young people, deliberately inflict injuries on a child, or knowingly do not prevent such injuries. It includes injuries caused by hitting, shaking, squeezing, biting or using excessive force. It also occurs when individuals give young people alcohol, or inappropriate drugs, or fails to supervise their access to these substances.

In a rugby situation, physical abuse may occur when:

- 4.3.1 Coaches, managers or helpers expose young players to exercise/training which disregards the capacity of the players immature and growing body;
- 4.3.2 Coaches, managers or helpers expose young players to overplaying, over training or fatigue;
- 4.3.3 Coaches, managers or helpers expose young players to alcohol, or give them the opportunity to drink alcohol below the legal age;
- 4.3.4 Coaches, managers or helpers expose young players to performance enhancing drugs and recommend that they take them.

4.4 SEXUAL ABUSE

Girls and boys are abused by adults, both male and female, who use young people to meet their own sexual needs. Examples include forcing a child to take part in sexual activity such as sexual intercourse, masturbation, or oral sex. Showing children pornographic material or making suggestions that sexual favours can help (or refusal hinder) a sporting career.

In a rugby situation, sexual abuse may occur when:

- 4.4.1 The close proximity of coaches and others, to young people provides opportunities for potential abusers to exploit their position of trust to sexually abuse.

SECTION 5 - POOR PRACTICE

Poor practice includes any behaviour which contravenes any of the following:

- 5.1.1 RFU Fair Play Codes;
- 5.1.2 RFU/RFUW Coaches' Code of Conduct (see Appendix 3);
- 5.1.3 RFU/RFUW Equity Policy;
- 5.1.4 RFUW "Good Practice in the Rugby Setting" (see Section 13);
- 5.1.5 RFU/RFUW Welfare and Procedures Policy for Young People;
- 5.1.6 Accepted responsibilities of all individuals delivering the game to young people.

SECTION 6 - BULLYING

Bullying is not always easy to define and will not always be an adult abusing a young person. It is often the case that the bully is a young person. There are three main types of bullying:

- 6.1 Physical, e.g. hitting, kicking, theft;
- 6.2 Verbal, e.g. racist or homophobic remarks;
- 6.3 Emotional, e.g. persistent negative feedback.

All of these will include:

- 6.4 Deliberate hostility and aggression towards a victim;
- 6.5 A victim who is weaker and less powerful than the bully or bullies;
- 6.6 An outcome which is always painful and distressing for the individuals.

Bullying behaviour may also include:

- 6.7 Other forms of violence;
- 6.8 Sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing;
- 6.9 Tormenting, ridiculing, humiliation;
- 6.10 Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures;
- 6.11 Unwanted physical contact or abusive, offensive comments of sexual nature.

The competitive nature of rugby union makes it a potential environment for the bully. This may manifest itself in some of the following ways:

- 6.12 A parent who pushes too hard;
- 6.13 A coach who adopts a 'win at all costs' philosophy;
- 6.14 A player who intimidates others;
- 6.15 An official who is over officious.

It is of paramount importance that all rugby clubs have in place an ANTI-BULLYING POLICY (see Appendix 5) to which all players, coaches, and parents subscribe.

SECTION 7 - INDICATORS OF ABUSE OUTSIDE OF THE RUGBY SETTING TO BE AWARE OF

These indicators are not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of them is not proof that the young person is being abused.

7.1 Physical abuse

- 7.1.1 Current unexplained injuries;
- 7.1.2 Inappropriate excuses to explain injury;
- 7.1.3 Untreated injuries;
- 7.1.4 Fear of returning home;
- 7.1.5 Aggression towards others.

7.2 Neglect

- 7.2.1 Constant hunger and tiredness;
- 7.2.2 Poor personal hygiene;
- 7.2.3 Poor state or inappropriate clothing;
- 7.2.4 Frequent lateness or absence from the coaching sessions;
- 7.2.5 Low self-esteem;
- 7.2.6 Poor peer relationships.

7.3 Emotional Abuse

- 7.3.1 Low self-esteem;
- 7.3.2 Decline in concentration levels;
- 7.3.3 Continual self-depreciation;
- 7.3.4 Emotional immaturity;
- 7.3.5 Extremes of behaviour.

7.4 Sexual Abuse

- 7.4.1 Unexplained changes in behaviour;
- 7.4.2 Inappropriate sexual awareness;
- 7.4.3 Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour;
- 7.4.4 Distrust of adults;
- 7.4.5 Inappropriate language.

Sometimes changes in behaviour can relate to other significant events in a young person's life, such as bereavement, internal family difficulties or bullying. Working in partnership with parents/carers and ensuring positive communication will help to ensure that reasons for changes in behaviour can be identified and action taken to support the young person.

It is NOT the responsibility of those working in rugby union to decide that abuse is occurring, but it IS their responsibility to act on any concern.

(Please refer to Sections 10 and 11).