RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

# Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults in Rugby Union Policy & Guidance

## CREATING SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

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RUGBY FOOTBALL FOUNDATION

NSPCC
Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP.

# Foreword

The RFU greatly appreciates the army of volunteers who give up their time to organise mini and youth rugby and strive to provide the highest standards of care for children and vulnerable adults in a safe and enjoyable environment.

Children are the future of our sport and it is important that we help them to acquire rugby union's values from an early age and set the highest standards as role models, while ensuring their safety and wellbeing.

Everyone working with boys, girls and vulnerable adults is in a position of trust, influence and responsibility by virtue of their position in our sport and must always act in the best interest of those children or vulnerable adults.

It is recognised that some people use their position within sport and youth organisations to gain access to children or vulnerable adults, win their trust and then abuse it for inappropriate or illegal purposes. We are all responsible for policing the rugby environment and ensuring that anyone in our sport seeking to abuse their position of trust is deterred and punished.

This policy and guidance sets out how organisations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults in accordance with the Children Acts, 1989 & 2004, and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act, 2006. It is important that all those delivering a safe rugby environment fully understand their responsibilities.

It attempts to achieve a balance between establishing sufficient control to minimise the risk of abuse to children and vulnerable adults, while not over burdening the willing volunteer. It includes the mandatory legal requirements, and also highlights signs which should raise suspicions of abuse as well as practices which should be avoided, in the best interests of children, vulnerable adults and those responsible for their wellbeing.

**John Steele**
RFU Chief Executive Officer

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# Policy Statement

The Rugby Football Union (RFU) is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and vulnerable adults in the sport. All children and vulnerable adults are entitled to protection from harm and have the right to take part in sport in a safe, positive and enjoyable environment.

The key principles on which this policy statement are based:

- The welfare of the child or vulnerable adult is paramount
- All participants regardless of age, gender, ability or disability, race, faith, size, language or sexual identity, have the right to protection from harm
- All allegations and suspicions of harm will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly, fairly and appropriately
- Everyone will work in partnership to promote the welfare, health and development of children and vulnerable adults
- The interests of those who work or volunteer with children and vulnerable adults will be protected

# Children and Vulnerable Adults

> “Everyone shares responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, irrespective of individual roles. Nevertheless, in order that organisations and practitioners collaborate effectively, it is vital that all partners who work with children – including local authorities, the police, the health service, the courts, professionals, the voluntary sector and individual members of local communities – are aware of, and appreciate, the role that each of them play in this area.”

Working Together to Safeguard Children (DCSF, 2010)

### Defining Children

Children are defined in the Children Act 2004 as people under the age of 18 years. For the purposes of this Policy the legal definition applies.

### Male 17 Year Olds Playing in the Adult Game

This Policy covers all players under 18. However, in accordance with RFU Regulation 15, a male player can, with the neccessary written consent, play in the adult game when he reaches his 17th birthday, although not play in a front row position until his 18th birthday. The only exception is players within the Elite England Rugby performance pathway, whose playing development is managed through the England National Academy.

A club’s management team must have assessed and continue to assess, that any 17 year old player playing in adult games or training is both physically, emotionally and intellectually capable of taking part.

Those responsible for the management of adult teams which include 17 year olds, must at all times be mindful of their safety and wellbeing and ensure that a suitable adult from within the team and management acts as a mentor or buddy.

If a 17 year old is playing rugby under Regulation 15.1.4.4, while playing or training with the adults he is treated as an adult and the detail of this policy does not apply.

However, as soon as he is out of that environment the player is once again a child and thus the policies and legislation regarding children apply. This section does not apply to the women’s game where female players may only play in the adult game from their 18th birthday.

### Defining Vulnerable Adults

Vulnerable adults are defined in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 as someone 18 years or older who has:

- a dependency upon others, or a requirement for assistance from others, in the performance of basic physical functions
- severe impairment in their ability to communicate with others
- an impairment in their ability to protect themselves from assault, abuse or neglect
- has been detained in lawful custody or is being supervised as a result of a court order

Whilst this Policy refers to both children and vulnerable adults throughout, there are instances in which the management, both internally and externally, of concerns and incidents involving vulnerable adults may vary slightly from those involving children. In particular, and in contrast to the situation when dealing with children, it is essential to obtain a vulnerable adult’s consent (where possible) before referring the matter to any of the statutory agencies. For further advice and guidance please contact the RFU Safeguarding Team.

# The Core Values of Rugby Union in England

Rugby Union is one of England's fastest growing team sports bringing new challenges and a need to promote the sport's strengths.

Our Core Values are:

# TEAMWORK
# RESPECT
# ENJOYMENT
# DISCIPLINE
# SPORTSMANSHIP

The RFU, in partnership with Premiership Rugby and the Rugby Players Association, promotes the Core Values through the 'This is Rugby' campaign to everyone from the England team to those in the grassroots game. The Core Values are reflected throughout this document.

# Putting this Policy into Practice: Safe Recruitment

Children and vulnerable adults are entitled to participate in rugby union activities in a safe and welcoming environment. Whilst anyone has the potential to abuse children or vulnerable adults, safe recruitment procedures will enable clubs or Constituent Bodies (CB) to reduce this risk. When recruiting employees or volunteers all reasonable steps should be taken to ensure only suitable people are selected.

## Mandatory Vetting of Volunteers and Employees

Adults working with children and vulnerable adults in a voluntary or paid capacity in rugby union must have an Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure processed and risk assessed by the RFU.

The CRB is an Executive Agency of the Home Office which helps organisations to make safer recruitment decisions. It acts as a one-stop-shop, checking police records and information held by the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). It provides access to an individual's criminal record through its disclosure service.

Before working unsupervised with children or vulnerable adults, CRB clearance is essential and vetting through CRB application must be undertaken in accordance with RFU Regulations.

CRB certificates will be cleared or investigated by the RFU as appropriate. Applications must be submitted within four weeks of taking up a role and must be renewed with the RFU every three years.

The RFU does not accept CRB clearance obtained through any other organisation.

Constituent Bodies and clubs will need to regularly assess which staff and volunteers need to apply for CRB clearance via the RFU.

**ISA registration** which was scheduled to start from 26 July 2010 will not go ahead in its proposed form, the government having suspended it pending a comprehensive review.

However, the new safeguarding legislation introduced on 12 October 2009 continues to apply:

- It is a criminal offence for a barred person to work or volunteer in Regulated Activity, or to seek or offer to do so
- It is a criminal offence to knowingly allow a barred person to work or volunteer in Regulated Activity. The maximum penalty for either of these offences is up to five years in prison, or a fine, or both, to be decided by the court
- If you dismiss a member of staff or volunteer because they have harmed a child or vulnerable adult, or you would have done so if they had not left, you must tell the RFU, who have a legal duty to notify the Independent Safeguarding Authority

**Regulated Activity** is where a person aged 16 or over is, on a frequent (once a week or more often), or intensive (four days or more in any 30 day period) or overnight (between 2am and 6am) basis, deployed to work with children or vulnerable adults. It also includes roles managing or supervising, on a regular basis, the work of those carrying out these activities.

For further help and guidance: visit www.rfu.com/ManagingRugby, or contact the RFU Safeguarding Team on 0208 831 7454

# Working Together Roles & Responsibilities

In order to operate within the legal and regulatory framework, the RFU, its Constituent Bodies and member clubs will work together, each with a clear role, in order to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

## The RFU

- Appoints a lead officer to manage its safeguarding programme
- Works in partnership with CBs, clubs, police, local Children's Services departments and the NSPCC
- Manages CRB clearance and notifies the Independent Safeguarding Authority of anyone dismissed because of harming a child or vulnerable adult
- Co-ordinates a safeguarding programme through a network of volunteer CB Safeguarding Managers (CBSM) and Club Safeguarding Officers (CSO) and provides appropriate training and support to them
- Provides training and support for the wider paid and volunteer workforce
- Manages incident referrals in accordance with RFU regulations and protocols
- Takes disciplinary action against those who breach RFU Regulations

## The CB

- Appoints and manages a CB Safeguarding Manager and, where appropriate, a deputy
- Ensures that the CBSM has representation or a reporting mechanism within the CB structure
- Ensures that each club running activity for children or vulnerable adults has its own safeguarding policy
- Co-ordinates the management of CRB disclosures through the CBSM
- Ensures that all safeguarding incidents or issues are reported to the RFU Safeguarding team and manages disciplinary cases referred back to the CB by the RFU
- Conducts a Safeguarding Audit on a minimum of 10% of member clubs per year

## The Club

- Appoints a Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO), and where appropriate a deputy, as the first point of contact for safeguarding and welfare concerns
- Ensures that the CSO:
  - is a member of, or attends the appropriate club committees making safeguarding issues a priority at the proper level; and
  - works in accordance with the CSO Toolkit
- Develops a safeguarding training plan ensuring that as a minimum:
  - the CSO attends a Club Safeguarding Officers Workshop within six months of taking up the post
  - each mini and youth age group has at least one person who has attended the RFU Safeguarding and Protecting Young People in Rugby Union course
- Informs all members, parents and children when a new CSO is appointed
- Publishes the club's own safeguarding policy and makes it accessible to all members
- Ensures all club officers and committee members are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities
- Ensures that at any youth disciplinary panel the CSO supports the child and ensures the panel considers the child's emotional wellbeing throughout
- Identifies any signs of harm and reports them to the CBSM and/or the RFU Safeguarding team
- Ensures that the club's volunteer and paid workforce is appropriately vetted and follows the Best Practice Guidance.

## The Volunteer and Employee

- Works towards creating a safe, friendly and welcoming environment and treats children and vulnerable adults with respect in accordance with the Core Values
- Has an enhanced CRB disclosure processed and cleared by the RFU and renewed every 3 years, in accordance with RFU Regulations;
- Understands and complies with their club's safeguarding policy
- Aims to follow all guidance in this document when working closely with children and/or vulnerable adults
- Completes any training considered appropriate for their role

# Best Practice Guidance

The RFU's aim is to create a culture where everyone feels confident to raise legitimate concerns without prejudice to their own position. Concerns about the behaviour of coaches, officials or any members of the paid and volunteer workforce which may be harmful to a child or vulnerable adult in their care must be reported to the RFU Safeguarding Team through the Club Safeguarding Officer or CB Safeguarding Manager.

While remembering that it is the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults that is of paramount importance, there will be times when those responsible will need to exercise discretion and common sense to ensure their wellbeing.
This guidance is designed to provide information on a number of different topics which CBs, clubs and their volunteers and employees may find useful and will help them to create safe, friendly and welcoming environments for children and vulnerable adults.

Further guidance is available from the Club Safeguarding Toolkit, or from rfu.com/ManagingRugby, or the RFU Safeguarding Team.

## Safe Environments

A safe environment is one where: the possibility of abuse is openly acknowledged; volunteers and employees are vetted and trained; and those who report suspicions and concerns are confident that these will be treated seriously and confidentially.

Communication is central to maintaining a safe environment; this includes information given to parents at the start of the season (such as the CSO's name), choosing the correct and appropriate method of providing information to children and vulnerable adults (email/phone to parents), listening to children's views on matters which affect them, as well as considering how to communicate in an emergency (mobile/landline).

Messages relating to children, sent via telephone, emails and texts, should be through their parents/guardians. Where appropriate older players may be copied in but this should always be done by blind copying in order to protect their data. Direct personal communication with children should always be avoided, unless in exceptional circumstances.

## Recruitment

Clubs should have a suitable paid and/or volunteer workforce and all reasonable steps should be taken to exclude anyone who may pose a threat to children or vulnerable adults. When recruiting new volunteers, clubs should consider asking anyone unknown to the club to provide a written reference, which the club should then verify.

## Training

Clubs should encourage all adults who have a coaching role to attend an appropriate Rugby Union Coaching Award course and an RFU Safeguarding and Protecting Young People in Rugby Union training course.

All Club Safeguarding Officers must, within six months of being appointed, attend the RFU Club Safeguarding Officers Workshop, which covers their role and responsibilities. Failure to attend means they may not be permitted to continue in the role.
The behaviour and performance of new volunteers and employees should be monitored for a period to ensure they are using best practice.

## Supervision

To provide a safe environment, clubs should ensure that their volunteers and employees when working with children or vulnerable adults avoid working in isolation out of the sight of parents or other volunteers. Whilst volunteers and employees are awaiting their CRB disclosure they must be supervised by someone who does have CRB clearance.

Contingency planning should ensure that if a player's injury requires significant attention, or coaches are absent or away with a team, levels of supervision can be maintained by suitably vetted individuals. However, in an emergency, the first attention must be paid to an injured player and if there are insufficient suitably vetted people available to supervise the remaining players, clearly, responsible adults will need to be asked to step in.

## Adult : Child Ratios

There should always be more than one suitably vetted adult in charge of any group of children or vulnerable adults.

The RFU recommends a minimum ratio of:

- 1:10 for children over 8 years old or vulnerable adults
- 1:8 for children under 8 years old
- 1:6 for children under 7 years old

### On Tour

These Policy guidelines apply equally on tour as at the club. When on tour if an adult is solely there supporting their own child they will not need CRB clearance but they will if they are acting in any official capacity with other children. This would apply to those on bedtime or other supervisory duties.

When on tour with a group of vulnerable adults clubs are advised to conduct a thorough risk assessment and apply a suitable ratio based on the individuals and their companions/carers within the tour party.

For more detailed guidance please read the Club Safeguarding Toolkit and Tour guidelines.

### Inappropriate Relationships with Children or Vulnerable Adults

An adult in a position of trust must not enter into a sexual relationship with a child in their care. Sexual intercourse, sexual activity, or inappropriate touching by an adult with a child under the age of 16 years is a criminal offence, even where there is apparent consent from the child.

A consensual sexual relationship between an adult in a position of trust and a child over 16 years of age, or a vulnerable adult, is a breach of trust and an abuse of the adult's position. Whilst it may not be a criminal offence, in a rugby union setting it will be treated very seriously and may result in RFU disciplinary action, including suspension from attending rugby clubs.

The RFU has a legal duty to refer anyone removed from Regulated Activity to the Independent Safeguarding Authority. Therefore, an adult in a position of trust involved in a consensual sexual relationship with a child over 16 years of age, or a vulnerable adult, may be referred to the ISA for consideration. This could result in the adult being barred from working with children or vulnerable adults by the ISA.

No-one in a position of trust should encourage a physical or emotionally dependent relationship to develop between them and a child or vulnerable adult in their care; this is often referred to as grooming. Adults must never send children or vulnerable adults inappropriate or sexually provocative messages or images by text, or other electronic media.

### Safeguarding Disabled Children & Vulnerable Adults

Disabled children and adults and their families may need additional information, help and support. The club's paid and volunteer workforce may require training and advice to ensure they include and safeguard them.

Some children and vulnerable adults may be more susceptible to harm than other participants because they may: lack the mutual support and protection of a peer group, require higher degrees of physical care and support, have limited communication skills, find it difficult to resist inappropriate interventions, have several carers making it difficult to identify an abuser, have a history of having limited or no choice or have a degree of dependency on a carer conflicting with the need to report harm or raise concerns.

For disabled children, the RFU recognises the guidance in the Government document Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) which states:

> "Expertise in both safeguarding and promoting the welfare of child and disability has to be brought together to ensure that disabled children receive the same levels of protection from harm as other children"

Detailed guidance covering a wide range of disabilities and strategies for managing challenging behaviour may be found at: rfu.com/ManagingRugby

# Best Practice Guidance
## Continued

### Good role models

The paid and volunteer workforce should consistently display high standards of personal behaviour and appearance and refrain from pursuits considered unhealthy in front of their players. They must not make sexually explicit comments to children or vulnerable adults and any language which causes them to feel uncomfortable or lose confidence or self-esteem is unacceptable, as is the use of obscene or foul language.

### Alcohol

It is important that all rugby clubs' management committees take considered, positive action to ensure that they are responsible licensees.

It is against the law:

- To sell alcohol to someone under 18
- For an adult to buy or attempt to buy alcohol on behalf of someone under 18
- For someone under 18 to buy alcohol, attempt to buy alcohol or to be sold alcohol
- For someone under 18 to drink alcohol in licensed premises, with one exception - 16 and 17 year olds accompanied by an adult can drink but not buy beer, wine and cider with a table meal
- For an adult to buy alcohol for a person under 18 for consumption on licensed premises, except as above

At training sessions and games for children, adults' drinking habits may affect both children's attitude to alcohol and their emotional well-being. As role models adults should avoid excessive drinking in their presence.

The unexpected can always happen; there should always be adults who abstain from drinking alcohol to deal with any emergencies and to manage the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults in their care.

### Contact rugby

The wellbeing and safety of children and vulnerable adults must be placed above the development of performance. Contact skills must be taught in a safe, secure manner paying due regard to the physical development of the players involved.

Adults and children must never play contact versions of the sport together including training games or contact drills. They may play either tag or touch rugby together if these games are managed and organised appropriately (rfu.com/TakingPart/Play/Leisure). A risk assessment on the conditions, players and apparent risks should be carried out by a person responsible for the overall session.

### Coaching techniques

Any inappropriate or aggressive contact or touching between adults and children or vulnerable adults is unacceptable and a number of principles should be followed when teaching contact rugby:

- Physical handling by a coach must only be used for safety reasons or where there is no other way of coaching the technique (Level 1 Coaching Award in Rugby Union)
- The reasons for physical contact should be explained wherever practicable so that children and their parents are comfortable with this approach
- The activity should always be conducted in an open environment and in the presence of another appropriately vetted adult.

### Physical intervention

Discipline on the field of play is the responsibility of the players. Coaches, team managers and parents must always promote good discipline amongst their players, both on and off the field. Penalising lack of discipline on the field of play which contravenes the laws of the game is the responsibility of the referee. Coaches, managers and spectators should not intervene or enter the field of play. Coaches of U7s and U8s may direct and develop play in a coaching sense on the field of play from behind their teams.

In a situation where individuals have to consider whether to intervene to prevent a child being injured, injuring themselves or others, physical intervention should always be avoided unless absolutely necessary. In these situations it is imperative to:

- Consider your own safety
- Give verbal instructions first
- Use the minimum reasonable force and only when necessary to resolve the incident, the purpose being restraint and reducing risk
- Do not strike blows, act with unnecessary force or retaliate
- Avoid contact with intimate parts of the body, the head and neck
- Stay in control of your actions

The CSO or CBSM should be notified at the earliest opportunity of an incident of physical intervention which involves possible dispute as a complaint might be lodged with the RFU or the police by a parent whose child has been physically restrained. The incident should be recorded on the RFU Incident Report Form (**to download, click here: Incident Report Form**) and sent to the RFU's Safeguarding Team.

Further guidance on managing challenging behaviour can be found at rfu.com/ManagingRugby

## Changing rooms and showers

Adults and children must never use the same facilities to shower or change at the same time.

Adults must only enter changing rooms when absolutely necessary due to poor behaviour, injury or illness. Adults must only ever enter the changing rooms by themselves in an emergency and when waiting for another adult could result in harm to a child.

If children or vulnerable adults need supervising in changing rooms, or coaches or managers need to carry out a range of tasks in that environment this must involve two suitably vetted adults of the same gender as the children or vulnerable adults. For mixed gender activities separate facilities should be available.

If the same facilities must be used by adults and children or vulnerable adults on the same day a clear timetable should be established. No pressure should be placed on children or vulnerable adults who feel uncomfortable changing or showering with others, if this is the case they should be allowed to shower and change at home.

Where a disability requires significant support from a parent; or carer, the person concerned and their parents should decide how they should be assisted to change or shower.

Before any assistance is offered by another person, appropriate consent should be given by a parent.

# Best Practice Guidance
## Continued

### Transportation

Clubs should develop a transport policy preferably publicised to parents via the club welcome pack and club website giving advice on dropping off and collecting children.

It should be made clear that in most instances it is the responsibility of parents, not the club, to transport their child or vulnerable adult to and from the club or nominated meeting point. If parents make arrangements between themselves this is a private arrangement and at the parents' discretion.

If the club **formally arranges** transport eg using minibuses or people carriers (as opposed to facilitating travel arrangements between parents) then the club should ensure that:

- Drivers have a valid driving licence and recruitment procedures, including vetting criteria have been followed and appropriate insurance and breakdown cover has been arranged
- The vehicle is suitable for the number of passengers and has operational safety belts and appropriate child car seats
- Parents give their consent and have the driver's contact details, with the driver having easy access to parents' contact details including mobile phone numbers
- No child or vulnerable adult is left alone in the car with the driver, unless it is the adult's own child or vulnerable adult. If, in extenuating circumstances, this situation arises the child or vulnerable adult should sit in the back of the car if possible
- The children involved are happy with the arrangement and adults are alert to any signs of disquiet.

If a club hires a coach from a reputable commercial coach company it is entitled to assume that the company provides properly maintained and insured vehicles and properly licensed drivers. However, children must never travel unaccompanied. A member of the club must travel with the children and that adult's contact details must be readily available to any parent who has reason to contact them.

In the event of a late collection of children or vulnerable adults, coaches and volunteers should: attempt to contact the parents, wait with the child or vulnerable adult, preferably in the company of others, notify the CSO/ club official and remind parents of their responsibility to collect their child promptly.

### Photographic Images

The RFU welcomes the taking of appropriate images of children in rugby clubs and has developed guidance for parents and the paid and volunteer workforce to enable suitable photographs to be taken celebrating the Core Values of the sport.

There are risks associated with the use of photographic images. RFU Guidance on Photographic Images and professional photography can be found on the Safeguarding pages of rfu.com; it is based on common sense. Clubs are advised to ensure that everyone is fully aware of, and complies with, this guidance.

### Sharing of electronic material/media

Clubs and CBs should be made aware of the advice contained in the Cyber-Guidance, available on Safeguarding pages of rfu.com. Websites can be a positive way to communicate with children. However, there are risks associated with internet useage. Rugby clubs are legally responsible for their website content and there should be nothing included which could harm a child, directly or indirectly. It is important to note that it is not acceptable to share sexually explicit or inappropriate material via any form of media with children or vulnerable adults. The online environment is ever changing; the guidance will be reviewed and updated when necessary.

# How to react to concerns about the welfare and safety of children and vulnerable adults

Safeguarding vulnerable people is everyone's responsibility. This means that everyone in rugby has a responsibility to respond to any concerns that they or others, may have about a child or vulnerable adult, or the behaviour of an adult.

Harm in the context of this policy is an action or behaviour which has a detrimental effect on a child or vulnerable adult's physical or emotional health or wellbeing. Harm is often referred to as neglect, abuse or bullying. In the case of vulnerable adults there is an additional category of abuse relating to financial matters, this includes: theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Harm may start as poor practice, which might include: shouting, excessive training, ignoring health and safety guidelines, failing to adhere to the club's Safeguarding Policy, poor management of multiple squad age groups, including favouring or discriminating against particular teams and ridicule of players' errors. Neither poor practice nor suspicions of harm should be ignored. Whether physical, sexual, emotional, bullying or neglect, suspicions of harm should always be reported and victims supported throughout. Please refer to the flowchart on the right hand side for the steps to be followed.

**Signs of harm**

It is important that in the rugby environment signs of harm are not ignored. These signs may include a child or vulnerable adult:

- Changing their usual routine
- Beginning to be disruptive during sessions
- Becoming withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence
- Having possessions going missing
- Becoming aggressive or unreasonable
- Starting to stammer or stopping communicating
- Having unexplained cuts or bruises
- Starting to bully other children
- Being frequently dirty, hungry or inadequately dressed
- Displaying sexual behaviour or using sexual language inappropriate for their age
- Seeming afraid of parents or carers
- Stopping eating
- Being frightened to say what's wrong
- Not wanting to attend training or club activities, or even leaving the club

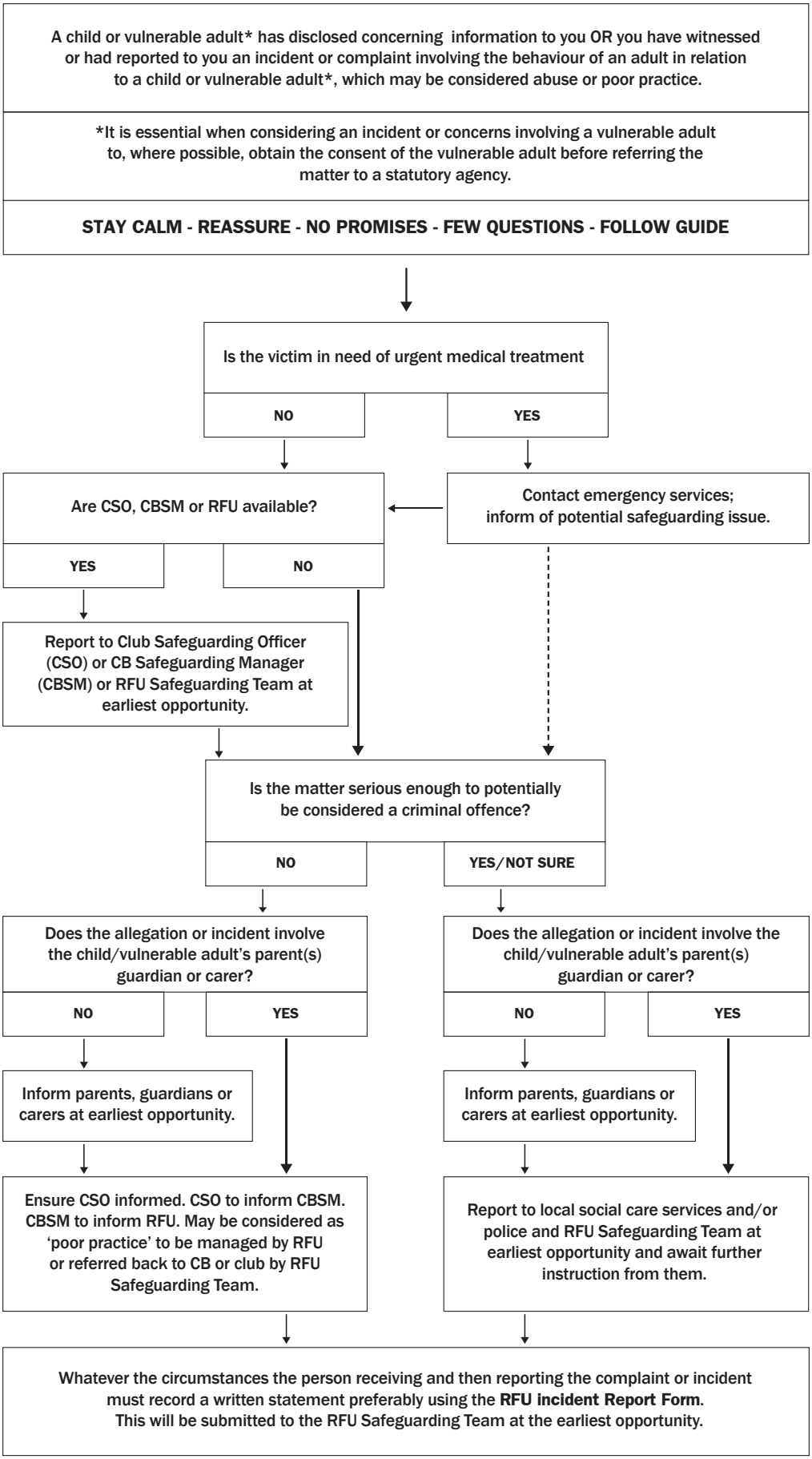
The above indicators should always be taken seriously and any concerns should be reported to the CSO. In their absence the CBSM or RFU Safeguarding team should be informed at the earliest possible opportunity. Any report must be made in writing and the RFU Safeguarding Incident Report Form is the most appropriate way of doing this.

There may be a number of reasons why a child displays concerning behaviour or their behaviour changes. It is advisable to discuss concerns with parents or carers in the first instance except where this may place a child at increased risk.

If a child or vulnerable adult discloses information to you, you should:

- Stay calm
- Reassure them that they are not to blame
- Avoid making promises of confidentiality or outcome
- Keep questions to a minimum
- Make brief, accurate notes at the earliest opportunity

An individual who becomes aware of any suspicions or concerns about the safety or welfare of a child or vulnerable adult must pass these on to the CSO as soon as possible. If they feel the child is in immediate risk of abuse then a statutory agency (local children's services or the police) should be contacted immediately. If a vulnerable adult is at risk of abuse, their consent to the statutory agencies being contacted should be obtained, if possible before doing so.


A child or vulnerable adult* has disclosed concerning information to you OR you have witnessed or had reported to you an incident or complaint involving the behaviour of an adult in relation to a child or vulnerable adult*, which may be considered abuse or poor practice.
*It is essential when considering an incident or concerns involving a vulnerable adult to, where possible, obtain the consent of the vulnerable adult before referring the matter to a statutory agency.
STAY CALM - REASSURE - NO PROMISES - FEW QUESTIONS - FOLLOW GUIDE
Is the victim in need of urgent medical treatment
NO
YES
Are CSO, CBSM or RFU available?
Contact emergency services; inform of potential safeguarding issue.
YES
NO
Report to Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO) or CB Safeguarding Manager (CBSM) or RFU Safeguarding Team at earliest opportunity.
Is the matter serious enough to potentially be considered a criminal offence?
NO
YES/NOT SURE
Does the allegation or incident involve the child/vulnerable adult's parent(s) guardian or carer?
Does the allegation or incident involve the child/vulnerable adult's parent(s) guardian or carer?
NO
YES
NO
YES
Inform parents, guardians or carers at earliest opportunity.
Inform parents, guardians or carers at earliest opportunity.
Ensure CSO informed. CSO to inform CBSM. CBSM to inform RFU. May be considered as 'poor practice' to be managed by RFU or referred back to CB or club by RFU Safeguarding Team.
Report to local social care services and/or police and RFU Safeguarding Team at earliest opportunity and await further instruction from them.
Whatever the circumstances the person receiving and then reporting the complaint or incident must record a written statement preferably using the RFU incident Report Form. This will be submitted to the RFU Safeguarding Team at the earliest opportunity.

# How the RFU will respond to suspicions or concerns

The RFU encourages and supports "whistle-blowing" and will, where appropriate, notify the statutory agencies of any allegation and work in partnership with them. RFU investigation will usually commence once the statutory agencies have completed their investigations and refer the case back to the RFU.

The wellbeing of the child or vulnerable adult must be central to any procedures involving them. The RFU will work in partnership with local children's services or care services departments and rugby clubs to support the victim and witnesses.

## Incident Referral Process

Once the RFU Safeguarding team receives written notification of an incident, allegation or disclosure they assume management of the case (providing it is not being dealt with by the police).

Once the RFU assumes management the club should take no further action until advised to do so by the RFU or relevant authority. The RFU will ensure that the club and Constituent Body are kept informed of procedure and progress.

Safeguarding investigations are handled by the RFU Safeguarding team and presented to the RFU's Referral Management Group (RMG) or its Sub-Group for consideration. The RMG is a cross-departmental group charged by the RFU with assessing the risk that individuals pose to children and vulnerable adults. The RMG is supported by an independent child protection adviser. Incidents may be referred by the RMG to the RFU Disciplinary department.

## Those under investigation

Under this policy the RFU is committed, first and foremost, to protecting the interests of the child or vulnerable adult. In the course of a referral being made to the RFU or statutory agencies, individuals who are accused of causing harm will be informed of the procedures by the RFU. They may also request at any time an update on the progress of the referral. No further support will be offered by the RFU during the course of the investigation. The Citizens Advice Bureau may be a useful source of information and support in these instances.

Investigations are concluded as quickly as possible to ensure that those guilty of causing harm are dealt with expeditiously and those falsely or mistakenly accused are able to return to the game with reputation intact.

## Suspension from Rugby Union

A temporary suspension order or suspension order may be issued by the RFU Legal Officer in accordance with RFU Regulations. Please refer to the RFU Regulations found in the RFU Handbook or on rfu.com for further information.

# Useful Phone Numbers

**RFU Child Protection Helpline 24hr Answerphone**
0208 831 6655
(non-emergency)

**Safeguarding concerns or queries**
0208 831 7479
rmg@therfu.com

**CRB queries**
0208 831 7454
crbeapp@therfu.com

**Safeguarding training courses**
0208 831 7987
rusafe@therfu.com

**NSPCC Helpline**
0808 800 5000
www.nspcc.org.uk
(for adults - 24hrs)

**Child Protection in Sport Unit**
0116 234 7278
www.thecpsu.org.uk

**ChildLine**
0800 1111
(for children - 24hrs)

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