



Strathmore Rugby Football Club

CHILD & VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY

Introduction

All sporting organizations, which make provision for children and young people, must ensure that:

- The welfare of the child/vulnerable adults is paramount;
- All children/vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender language, racial origin religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse;
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately;
- All staff (paid or unpaid) working in sport have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.
- Staff/volunteers are not trained to deal with situations of abuse nor decide if abuse has occurred.

Definitions:

Child: A person under the age of 18 years (The Children Act 1989)

Vulnerable Adult: A person aged 18 years or over who is, or may be, in need of community care services or is resident in a continuing care facility by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness or who is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation
Throughout this Policy any reference to child/children shall be deemed to incorporate reference to vulnerable adults where the terms so permit.

Policy statement

The Club has a duty of care to safeguard all children involved from harm. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. The Club will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved through adherence to the Child Protection guidelines adopted by the Scottish Rugby Union (SRU). All Clubs affiliated to the SRU, which have junior members, are required to have their own Child Protection Policy.

Policy aims

The aim of the Club's Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice:

Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of the Club;

Allow all staff /volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

Promoting Good Practice with Young People

Introduction

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take. Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment.

Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, official or volunteer may have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where a young person needs protection.

All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document. When a child enters the club having been subjected to child abuse outside the sporting environment, sport can play a crucial role in improving the child's self-esteem. In such instances the club must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the child receives the required support.

Good Practice Guidelines

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate within the Club:

Good practice means:

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging an open environment i.e. no secrets).
- Treating all young people/adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with players (e.g. it is not appropriate to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process;
- Making sport fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly and according to standard rugby coaching practice. Care is needed, as it is difficult to maintain hand or body positions when the child is constantly moving or being coached in a contact sport. Young people should always be consulted and their agreement gained. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.
- Keeping up to date with the technical skills, qualifications and insurance in rugby football.
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible (e.g. for the responsibility of their children in the changing rooms). If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure parents/coaches/officials work in pairs.
- Ensuring that at tournaments or residential events, adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms.

- Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults – avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given in lines with the SRU accident reporting requirements.

Practice to be avoided

The following should be avoided except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the club or the child's parents. For example, a child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session:

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others;
- Avoid taking children to your home where they will be alone with you.

Practice never to be sanctioned

The following should never be sanctioned. You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay;
- Share a room with a child;
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching;
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged;
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun;
- Reduce a child to tears;
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon;
- Do things of a personal nature for children or young adults, that they can do for themselves;
- Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.
- Never offer a child a lift home (unless written consent has been given by parents.)

Where a young person has not been picked up contact the parent/guardian to request they collect the child/young person. If you cannot make contact please call a taxi and accompany the child in a taxi.

It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or have been injured. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the players involved.

There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you as the result of an injury in match or practice, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained. If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to another colleague and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed.

- If you accidentally hurt a player.
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner.
- If a player appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a player misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done

Guidelines for Use of Photographic Filming Equipment at Sporting Events

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young and disabled sports people in vulnerable positions. It is advisable that all clubs be vigilant with any concerns to be reported to the Club Child Protection Officer.

Videoring as a coaching aid: there is no intention to prevent club coaches using video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid. However, players and their parents/carers should be aware that this is part of the coaching programme and care should be taken in the storing of such films.

Recruitment and selecting staff and volunteers - Disclosure Scotland PVG Scheme Record Check

The Club recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. All applicants who will work with children or vulnerable adults will be made aware that their employment is subject to the completion of a Disclosure Scotland PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) Scheme Record Membership, or where they are already a member and PVG Scheme Record update.

All applicants will be required to complete an application form or submit a CV, which provides the following information:

- Previous experience of working with children and young people.
- Names of two referees – one of whom should have knowledge of the applicant's previous work with children and young people
- A declaration of any past convictions or cases pending
- Evidence of identity (Passport or driving licence with Photo).

Responding to suspicions or allegations

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in the Club, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to take responsibility or to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities. The Club will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child. Where there is a complaint against a volunteer or a member of staff, there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation,
- A child protection investigation,
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

Action if there are concerns

The following action should be taken if there are concerns:

Poor Practice

If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; the Club's Child Protection Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.

If the allegation is about poor practice by the Club's Child Protection Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the Club President/Chairman who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

Suspected Abuse

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer
- should be reported to the Club's Child Protection Officer, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The Club's Child Protection Officer may refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of--hours .
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible.
- The Club's Child Protection Officer shall also notify the Club's President/Chairman who in turn will inform the Club's Media Manager who will deal with any media enquiries.
- If the Club's Child Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the Chairman or in his/her absence the Club's Director of Rugby who will investigate the matter in the place of the Club's Child Protection Officer.
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Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This includes the following people:

- The Club's Child Protection Officer;
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused;
- The person making the allegation;
- Social services/police;
- The SRU Child Protection Officer;
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child). *

*The Club's Child Protection Officer should consider seeking social services advice on who should approach alleged abuser. Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

Internal Enquiries and Suspension

The Club's Child Protection Officer, in consultation with two relevant members of the Club Management team (The Discipline Committee (DC)) will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.

Irrespective of any findings of the social services or police inquiries the DC will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the DC must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of children should always remain paramount.

Support to Deal with the Aftermath

Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to children, parents and members of staff. Use of Helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The British Association of Counselling Directory (The British Association for Counselling Directory is available from The British Association for Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ, Tel: 01788 550899, Fax: 01788 562189, E-mail: bac@bac.co.uk, Internet: www.bac.co.uk) may be a useful resource. Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to the alleged perpetrator of the abuse.

Allegations of Previous Abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff who is still currently working with children). Where such an allegation is made, the Club will follow the procedures as detailed above and may report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other children, either within or outside sport, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act 1999.

Action if Bullying is Suspected

The same procedure should be followed as set out in the Section relating to responding to suspicions or allegations, if bullying is suspected. All settings in which children are provided with rugby playing or coaching away from home should have rigorously enforced anti-bullying strategies in place.

Actions to Help the Victim and Prevent Bullying in Sport:

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns. Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority. Create an open environment.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).
- Report any concerns to the Club Child Protection Officer or the school (wherever the bullying is occurring).

Action Towards the Bully(ies):

- Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).
- Inform the bully(ies) 's parents.
- Insist on the return of borrowed items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- Provide support for the coach of the victim.
- Impose sanctions as necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
- Inform all organisation members of action taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken.

What to do if there are concerns

Information passed to the social services or the police must be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed record at the time of the disclosure/concern. Information should include the following:

- Name of child
- Age of child and date of birth
- Home address and telephone number
- Is the person making the report expressing their own concerns or those of someone else
- What is the nature of the allegation? Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Behavioural signs indirect signs?
- Witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted?
- If so what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details.
- If it is not the child making the report has the child concerned been spoken to? If so what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details

Social media & photography

Use of social media and taking photographs is largely a positive tool for promotion of rugby and recording of children's participation and enjoyment of the sport. However, there are risks associated and a few key principles should be followed.

- The club has the responsibility for their website and online presence and should keep children safe from harm in the same way as they do on their pitches and in their clubhouses.
- No personal information regarding a child should feature on the club website without having obtained parental consent for that use – for example avoid listing a child's full name, school, address etc.
- Club coaches should not be communicating directly with individual children through social media – e.g. should not be "friends" on Facebook.
- If a club is communicating with a group of players through social media it should be done in a closed group using details provided by parents and with parental consent.
- The club will monitor any sites that allow comments to be posted to ensure that there is no online bullying or critical comments about individual players/children.
- There may be children who are not able to be photographed (eg subject to court orders) and clubs should be responsive to this.
- No photographs must ever be taken within changing rooms, or where anyone is not appropriately dressed.
- Images must not be inappropriate or of a sexual or exploitative nature.
- Parents may be asked to register their intention to take photos and be given guidance on using these photos.

How Strathmore Rugby will respond

The wellbeing of children is at the centre of any concerns raised. Strathmore Rugby will always take any concerns seriously and our first priority will be to a victim and any witnesses.

Concerns will be referred to our Child Protection Officer in the first instance and then escalated if necessary. In some cases, the club's disciplinary procedures may also be involved and an individual's club membership may be suspended or terminated.

We will work with all members of the club, players and parents to provide support and guidance. Where required we will liaise closely with statutory agencies such as Scottish Rugby Union, Social Work, Police Scotland, Children 1st and NSPCC or Local Authority Child Protection Committees.

SRU Safeguarding Policy

The present SRU Safeguarding Policy was issued in March 2024. You can also access the policy on our website:

<https://scottishrugby.org/clubs-and-schools/safeguarding/safeguarding-policy/> .

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