



**Guinness Rugby Football Club
Child Welfare Policy Document**

The guidelines in this document are based on the national guidelines as outlined in the following documents.

1. Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, Irish Sports Council, Revised 2005.
2. Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Department. of Health & Children 2008.
3. IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document

For the purpose of this document we accept that a child is any person under the age of 18 years.

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Mission Statement and Guiding Principles

The club's mission statement is to provide the opportunity and encouragement for each child to enjoy Rugby in a safe positive learning environment, with the promotion of the values of fairness, mutual respect, courtesy and tolerance of others. Special effort will be provided to foster self discipline, enjoyment, physical fitness and high standards of rugby.

The work of Guinness Rugby Football Club is based on the following principles that will guide the development of sport for young people in this club. Children's experience of rugby should be guided by what is best for the children.

The stages of development and the ability of the child should guide the types of activity provided within the club. Adults should have a basic understanding of the needs of children, including physical, emotional and personal.

Guiding Principles Integrity in relationships: Adults interacting with young people in Rugby football should do so with integrity and respect for the child. All adult actions in Guinness RFC should be guided by what is best for the child and in the context of quality, open working relationships. Verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of any kind is unacceptable within Guinness Rugby Football club.

Quality atmosphere and competition rugby for children will be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. A balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to the development of young people, while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. Coaches/managers/mentors must put the welfare of the children first and competitive standards second.

A child-centred approach will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.

Equality All children should be treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of age, ability, sex, sexual orientation, religion, social and ethnic diversity or political persuasion.

Children with disabilities should be involved in sports activities in an integrated way, thus allowing them to participate to their potential alongside other children.

Fair Play: Fair play is the guiding principle of the Irish Sports Council's Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport. It states that "all children's sport should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play". Ireland has contributed and is committed to the European Code of Sports Ethics, which defines fair play as: "much more than playing within the rules". It incorporates the concepts of friendship, respect for others and always playing with the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just behaving.

Child Welfare Statement

Guinness Rugby Football club is committed to ensuring that all necessary steps will be taken to protect and safeguard the welfare of children who participate in Rugby related sports. This Policy document clearly demonstrates the importance placed by Guinness RFC on the welfare and safety of children who participate.

All children who participate in Rugby should be able to do so in a safe and enjoyable environment. While doing so they should be protected from any form of abuse, be it physical, emotional, sexual, neglect or bullying.

The responsibility for protecting children lies with all adults involved in this club. Guinness RFC recognises and accepts its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and by protecting them from physical, emotional or sexual harm and from neglect or bullying.

These clear policies, practices and procedures in addition to relevant training programmes will ensure that everybody in Guinness RFC knows exactly what is expected of them in relation to protecting children and young people within the activities of the club. It is vital that children who participate in Guinness RFC activities are able to do so in a safe, enjoyable and quality environment. In pursuit of this Guinness RFC will:

1. Advise all members of Guinness RFC (coaches, players, parents and spectators) of their responsibilities in relation to the welfare of children who participate in club activities.
2. Operate within the recommended Sports Council of Ireland/IRFU codes best practice guidelines for youth sport.
3. Appoint a Club Child Welfare Officer in line with IRFU and Sports Council of Ireland requirements.

Guinness RFC Child Welfare Policy

The aims are:

1. To provide appropriate guidance, procedures and advice to all club members (players, coaches, volunteers, spectators and parents) in all matters concerning child welfare and protection.
2. To demonstrate best practice in the area of child welfare and protection.
3. To promote ethics and best practice standards throughout the club membership.

The key principles underpinning this Policy are that:

1. The welfare of the child is the first and paramount consideration.
2. All children have a right to be protected from abuse of any kind regardless of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.
3. It is essential that we work in partnership with children and their parents/guardians. The *HSE* has a statutory responsibility to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and Guinness RFC is committed to cooperating fully with the *HSE* in accordance with procedures as outlined in "Children First" National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.
4. Guinness RFC will cooperate fully with the IRFU National Child Welfare Officer, Gardai and the *HSE* in any investigation of child abuse in Rugby activities.
5. All allegations of child abuse will be dealt with as per IRFU Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse.

Safety

All clubs should have a safety statement, including specific and potential risks attached to Rugby Football. They should also have procedures in place for safeguarding against such risks.

In addition clubs should:

1. Ensure activities are suitable for age and stage of development of players.
2. Keep a record of any specific medical conditions of the players.
3. Keep a record of emergency contact numbers for parents / guardians.
4. Such records such be readily attainable.
5. Ensure any necessary protective gear is used (gum shields are mandatory).
6. Keep First Aid kit stocked up and ensure it is close at hand with access to qualified first-aider.
7. Know the contact numbers of emergency services and easy access to medical personnel.
8. All clubs should have an emergency plan, which all club members are aware of.
9. If an incident occurs, make a brief record of injury and action taken. Note the problem, action and outcome.
10. Contact the players' parents and keep them informed of all details.
11. Officials (umpires, referees, etc.) should ensure the conduct of the game.
12. All players should know and keep the rules of rugby, keeping in mind that many rules are in place for safety.
13. Ensure there is adequate insurance cover for all activities.

Touching

Coaching, at certain times, may require a 'hands on approach', e.g., it may be necessary to support a child learning a new skill but the following should be taken into consideration:

1. Avoid unnecessary physical contact.
2. Any necessary contact should be in response to the needs of the player and not the coach/mentor.
3. It should be in an open environment with the permission and understanding of the player
4. It should be determined by the age and developmental stage of the player – do not do something that a player can do for themselves.
5. Never engage in inappropriate touching.

Personnel Recruitment Policy

Guinness RFC will take all reasonable steps to ensure that coaches, managers and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

There are three stages for new coaches: -

Application and declaration form to be completed by applicant –

Applicant must be approved & seconded by two members at committee meeting. –

Must complete courses as stipulated by the club during year of application

All coaches, managers and volunteers are required to complete an application/self declaration form, giving the names of two referees who will then be contacted.

Written references will then be verified and kept on file. All coaches/volunteers are subject to Garda clearance.

All appointments are subject to approval and ratification by the committee of Guinness RFC All coaches, managers and volunteers will be subject to a sign up procedure in which they undertake to abide by Guinness RFC club rules and IRFU codes of conduct and good practice. (Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained in regard to all application and reference forms).

Once recruited, Guinness RFC will make all efforts to support coaches, managers and volunteers ensuring that no person is expected to work alone with children.

Any person involved in coaching a team must have at least Foundation Level coaching or equivalent experience.

Guinness RFC Coach, Manager, Volunteer Education & Support Policy

The Committee of Guinness RFC are indebted to our volunteers who give freely of their valuable time in providing a stimulating, challenging, safe, supportive and fun experience to children in the club engaged in all aspects of Rugby. The Committee will endeavour to support these coaches, managers and volunteers in their work by providing an environment where all activities are carried out safely, and in a manner which ensures the spirit of "Fair Play" is adhered to at all times. Guinness RFC will make all efforts to assist new volunteers, managers, coaches in whatever way they can.

Guinness RFC will provide an induction programme to all new volunteers/coaches, which will familiarise them with club rules, policies and procedures and expected codes of behaviour for children, coaches and parents/spectators. The Committee of Guinness RFC recognise the value of having appropriately qualified personnel in the club, and therefore will support as required in the coach education process.

At no time will any coach, manager, volunteer be expected to work or deal with any problem alone and they will be assured of committee assistance and support at all times. Also, coaches, managers and volunteers are encouraged to share ideas, expertise and support other club personnel in any way they can.

Guinness RFC Coach/Mentor Code of Conduct

1. All coaches/managers in GUINNESS RFC have a responsibility to ensure the safety of the players with whom they work, as far as possible within the limits of their control.
2. Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person and treat each equally regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, race or ability.
3. Children should be taught the rules of the games and encouraged to abide by the rules, keeping in mind they are there for safety of them and others.
4. Be conscious of the development of young players and ensure that they are matched on an individual or team basis.
5. Be punctual, properly attired and lead by examples during all matches and training sessions. Parents/Guardians should be informed of the starting and finishing times of all training sessions/matches.
6. First aid should only be administered by certified personnel. Guardians should be notified of injuries/illness which their children incur while participating in any GUINNESS RFC activity.
7. Adequate supervision must be maintained at all times to ensure no mentor/coach works alone with children. Best Practice advice would advocate a minimum of two leaders to each group.
8. Ensure adequate preparation for each session and that the necessary equipment is available for all training sessions
9. Don't ridicule players for making a mistake, provide positive reinforcement at all times. Praise and reinforce effort and commitment.
10. Set realistic goals for each individual player based upon their abilities.
11. All trips and away matches must be approved by committee of Guinness RFC before notification to players.
12. Participation is important for children and one should, as a coach, not be pre-occupied with winning.
13. Records of attendance at training & matches must be maintained by the coach.
14. Corporal punishment/physical force should never be used.
15. Improper language and provocative gestures should never be used to a player or coach on an opposing team.
16. All notification/communication should be directed to the player's parents/guardians, and not directly to the player.
17. The code of behaviour for players involved in club activities should be promoted, encouraged and maintained by all coaches.

18. Respect the privacy of all children.
19. Being alone with a player is not appropriate practice. Should circumstances arise where this is unavoidable, immediately inform another responsible adult, by telephone if necessary. Make a note that the meeting with the player took place including the reason for it.
20. As a coach do not engage in or tolerate any behaviour be it verbal, psychological or physical which could be construed as bullying. Refer to Guinness RFC bullying policy, which all coaches must be aware of.
21. All coaches/managers must be familiar with and abide by the safety policies of the club.
22. Coaches/mentors/managers shall promote fair competition through the development of sound training practice and should actively discourage the use of any substance that is perceived to offer short cuts to improved performance.
23. Ensure only registered club members represent GUINNESS RFC in any match.
24. Players must not be asked to play more than 2 years above their age group

Sanctions and rules drawn out should always be fair, consistent and applied evenly, and in the case of a persistent offence, should be progressively applied.

1. Rules should be clearly stated and agreed between mentors and players.
2. A warning should be given if a rule is broken.
3. A time-out should be given to the offender if the rule is broken a second time.
4. If a rule is broken three or more times, the child should be spoken to and the parent/guardian involved if necessary.
5. Sanctions should only be used in a corrective way that is intended to help children improve both now and in the future. Sanctions should not be used to make the coach/manager/volunteer feel more powerful.
6. When violations of the team rules or other misbehaviours occur, sanctions should always be applied in an impartial and fair manner
7. Sanctions should never be used as threats. If a rule is broken, the appropriate sanction/s should be implemented consistently, fairly and firmly.
8. Sanctions should not be applied if the coach/manager/volunteer is not comfortable with them. If an appropriate action cannot be devised immediately, the child should be told that the matter will be dealt with later, at a specified time and as soon as is possible
9. Once a sanction/s has been imposed, it is important to make the child feel s/he is a valued member of the team again
10. A child should be helped, to understand if necessary why sanction/s are imposed
11. A child should not be sanctioned for making errors whilst playing rugby.
12. Physical activity (e.g. running laps or doing push ups) should not be used as a sanction as to do so may cause a child to resent physical activity which is something that s/he should learn to enjoy throughout his/her life. Remember rugby has to be fun if participants are to continue playing

13. Sanctions should be used sparingly. Constant criticism and sanctioning can cause participants to turn away from Rugby games.

Guinness RFC - Coach/Mentor Application & Self Declaration Form

(Please use block capitals) Name: _____

email address _____

Address: _____

Tel. (H) _____ (Mobile) _____

Sport Coaching Qualifications

| Name of Course | Award Held | Date of Award |
|----------------|------------|---------------|
| | | |
| | | |

Previous experience/involvement in sport? Please give details.

Have you ever been asked to leave a sporting organisation in the past? (If you have answered yes we will contact you in confidence)

| | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence? If so give details

(Having a criminal record does not necessarily preclude anyone from working with children. If you have answered "yes" you will be contacted in confidence)

Referee: Please supply the names, addresses and telephone numbers of two people whom we can contact and who from personal knowledge is willing to support your application. (If you have had a previous involvement in sport, one of these names should be that of an administrator/leader of your last club/place of involvement)

Name _____ Title _____ Tel. _____

Address _____

Name _____ Title _____ Tel. _____

Address _____

I agree to work within Guinness Rugby Football Club's approved codes of conduct & best practice guidelines.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Guinness Rugby Football Club Reference Form

Private and Confidential

Name: _____

Address: _____

The above has sought to act as a coach/mentor within Guinness Rugby Football Club and has supplied your name as a referee. As an organisation committed to the safety/protection and well being of children, we are anxious to know if you are satisfied that this person is suitable to work with children in a sporting capacity.

How long have you known this person?

In what capacity?

Are you satisfied that the above named person is suitable to work with children in a sporting capacity?

| | |
|-----|--|
| Yes | |
| No | |

(If you have answered no, we will contact you in confidence)

Signed: _____

Date: _____

AWAY TRIPS POLICY

Attention to the following will help to promote safety:

1. All away trips must be approved and sanctioned by the juvenile committee of Guinness RFC
2. Written permission of parents/guardians shall be obtained for all overnight trips.
3. The roles and responsibilities of adults participating in away trips shall be clearly defined.
4. Guinness Rugby Football Club will appoint a Team Manager/Head of Delegation for all away trips. He/She will have overall responsibility for the children's well being, behaviour and sleeping arrangements. He/She will be appointed as an official of Guinness Rugby Football Club for the duration of the trip. All coaches/volunteers are accountable to the Team Manager/Head of Delegation.
5. Children will be informed at the outset of who they can report any concerns they might have to. They shall be clearly encouraged to tell anybody if they have a concern.
6. Where there are mixed teams there shall be at least one female in the management/coaching structure
7. The Team Manager/Head of Delegation shall submit a verbal report to the Guinness Rugby Football Club juvenile committee as soon as possible after the trip.
8. As a norm adults should not share a room with children. Where the presence of an adult is required there should be more than one adult in the room with the children. If children are sharing, it should be with those of the same age and sex.
9. Coaches/volunteers are advised to avoid being alone with one child. If talking separately do so in an open environment, in view of others.
10. Adequate child ratios should always be maintained (This can depend on the ages of the children and the nature of the activity involved) in line with common standards of practice.
11. Adequate supervision shall be maintained at all times. On all away trips parents are encouraged to attend.
12. Guinness Rugby Football Club shall ensure that there is adequate insurance cover for the trip.
13. When driving, coaches/volunteers are required to ensure adequate insurance and do not carry more than the permitted number of passengers. Ensure the use of seat belts, only busses with seat belts should be used to carry children on away trips.
14. Coaches/Volunteers are discouraged from travelling alone in their cars with one child.

Child Welfare Officer

1. The appointment of Club Child Welfare Officer is an essential element in the creation of a quality atmosphere in any club. He/She acts as a resource to members with regard to children's issues and also ensures that children have a voice in the running of the club and can freely talk of their experiences.
2. Government guidelines advise that a Child Welfare Officer should be appointed by all clubs and this should be done in accordance with recommended selection and recruitment procedures. The appointment of this person should be; carried out in consultation with juvenile members and their parent/guardians, and ratified at each annual AGM. Guinness Rugby Football Clubs' Child Welfare Officer will have the following functions:
 - a. To promote the IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document & Irish Sport's Council Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's sport.
 - b. To influence policy and practice and to prioritise children's needs.
 - c. To ensure that children know how and whom they can report their concerns to within the club. Information disclosed by a child should be dealt with in accordance with the Department of Health and Children's Guidelines "*Children First*".
 - d. To encourage the participation of parents/guardians in club activities.
 - e. To co-operate with parents to ensure that each child enjoys his/her participation in rugby.
 - f. To act as a resource with regard to best practice in children's sport.
 - g. To report regularly to the Club's Youth Coordinator .
 - h. Club Children's Officers do not have the responsibility of investigating or validating child protection concerns within the club and have no counselling or therapeutic role. This responsibility lies with the Health Service Executive and Gardai.
3. Guinness Rugby Football Club have appointed **Martin Gillick** as our Child Welfare Officer and he can be contacted at **087-9970284** who will be responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of children. The Child Welfare Officer is responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to Health Services Executive and/or An Garda Síochána.

Policy on the Use of Photographic and Filming Equipment

In line with the recommendation in Guinness Rugby Club's Code of Conduct, any person wishing to engage in any video, zoom or close range photography should register their details with the organisers. Children and young people should only be photographed or filmed with their permission and/or the permission of their parents/guardian.

For Club Publications

If a child's photograph on their own is published, avoid naming the player.

Ask for parental permission to use a child's image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport.

Only use images of players in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child.

General Policy

No photography is allowed in the changing room/dressing areas. This includes the use of Camera phones.

Photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek permission/accreditation with the children's officer, team manager/coach and/or event organiser of session. The club will:

Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour

Issue the photographer with identification which must be worn at all times

Keep a record of accreditations

Inform players and parents that a photographer will be in attendance at an event and ensure they consent to both the taking and publication of films or photographs

Not allow unsupervised access to players or one to one photo sessions at events

Not approve/allow photo sessions outside the events or at a child's home.

Videoing as a coaching aid:

Video equipment can be used as a legitimate coaching aid. However, permission should first be obtained from the player and the player's parent/guardian. Anyone concerned about any photography taking place at events/matches or training sessions should bring their concerns to the attention of the committee/team manager/coach or child welfare officer.

Code of Conduct for Parents

1. Remember, young people play rugby for their enjoyment, not only yours.
2. Encourage your child always to play by the Laws of the Game.
3. Teach young children that honest endeavour is as important as winning, so that the result of each game is accepted without disappointment.
4. Help young people to work towards skill improvement and good sportsmanship.
5. Set a good example by applauding good play on both sides.
6. Never ridicule, humiliate or shout at young players for making a mistake or losing a match.
7. Do not place emphasis on winning at all costs.
8. Do not force an unwilling child to participate in the playing of rugby. If the child is to play, he/she will do so in good time through your encouragement.
9. Support all efforts to remove verbal & physical abuse from rugby.
10. As a spectator do not use profane language or harass referees, coaches or players.
11. Do not publicly question the referee's judgement and never their honesty.
12. Recognise the value and importance of volunteer referees and coaches.
13. Identify and acknowledge the good qualities of the Game of Rugby and uphold these values.
14. Remember you and your child's contribution to the Game of Rugby is very important to the IRFU and be proud of your contribution.
15. Understand the value of team sport and its importance.

Code of Conduct for Spectators

1. Remember that although young people play organised rugby they are not 'miniature internationals'.
2. Be on your best behaviour and lead by example. Do not use profane language or harass referees, players or coaches.
3. Applaud good play by the visiting team as well as your own.
4. Show respect for your team's opponents. Without them there would not be a match.
5. Condemn the use of violence in all forms at every opportunity.
6. Verbal abuse of players or referees cannot be accepted in any shape or form.
7. Players or referees are not fair targets for ignorant behaviour.
8. Encourage young players to play by the Laws of the Game.
9. Spectators can contribute to the enjoyment of the event and all involved.
10. Be proud of your club and the Game of Rugby.

Code of Conduct for Referees

1. Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every child and treat everyone equally, regardless of gender, disability, ethnic origin, religion, etc.
2. All referees must be a member of their Branch Referees Association.
3. Act as a role model and promote the positive aspects of rugby and maintain the highest standards of personal conduct.
4. Be responsible for monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with players.
5. Avoid being alone with underage persons.
6. Never deal with injuries unless qualified to do so.
7. Encourage coaches/parents to act responsibly and to be responsible for the behaviour and performance of players.
8. Ensure that safety is paramount in all games.
9. Follow agreed protocols regarding shower arrangements after matches.
10. Agree appropriate times for entry to changing rooms to deal with match preparation and ensure members of the team management are present.
11. Be punctual, prepared and well presented.
12. Ensure players and officials comply with the Laws of the Game.
13. Never criticise individual players and or coaches or parents.

14. Adhere to all rules and procedures as agreed by the Branch Referees Association

Adapted from the Irish Sports Councils Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's Sport (Reviewed 2005) and the IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document

Responding to accidents and complaints or to alleged or suspected child abuse

Guinness RFC accepts that organizations, which include young people among its members, are vulnerable to the occurrence of child abuse. Child welfare and the protection of young people is the concern of all adults at all times, irrespective of their role within the organization.

Below are the procedures for dealing with any welfare or protection issue that may arise.

A report may be made by any member in the club but should be passed on to the Child Welfare Officer who may in turn have to pass the concern to the Local Statutory Authorities.

It is not the responsibility of anyone working within Guinness RFC in a paid or voluntary capacity, or those working in affiliated organisations, to take responsibility or decide whether or not child abuse is taking place - that is the job of the Local Statutory Authorities.

However, there is a responsibility to protect young players by assisting the appropriate agencies so that they can take any necessary action to protect the young person.

All members should follow both procedures outlined below, firstly the procedure for responding to a young person in distress and secondly the procedure for reporting a concern.

Disciplinary complaints and appeals procedure

Guinness Rugby Football Club encourages all club members to make every reasonable effort to address their concerns and resolve their issues with another club member informally before filing a formal, written grievance.

It is in the best interest of all involved with Guinness Rugby Football Club if we can resolve differences without the need for a formal grievance. The issues would preferably be dealt with in private and not within the view or hearing of other club members, especially the children.

If you are unable to resolve your grievance informally and wish to have the intervention of Guinness Rugby Football Club, then you must file a formal, written grievance.

If any Guinness Rugby Football Club member has a complaint against another club member for a violation of a club rule or code of conduct, they may file such a complaint in writing to the Child Welfare Officer. Such complaints will be processed according to the procedure outlined below.

Your grievance should be submitted to the Child Welfare Officer within 2 weeks of the event in question.

The complaint will be brought to the attention of the club chairperson. The chairperson or a designee may speak to the club member raising the grievance and attempt to resolve the issue.

If this is successful the secretary will notify the club committee at the next club meeting of the fact that a grievance had been dealt with, and may provide broad outlines but always maintaining the anonymity of all parties involved.

If the issue is not yet resolved, the chairperson will convene a grievance committee.

Copies of the written grievance will be made available to all members whom the grievance addresses, and to the members of the grievance committee.

The grievance committee will meet to determine whether a hearing is necessary.

If the complaint involves a criminal offense and or an alleged incident of abuse against a child the disciplinary committee will be disbanded and the statutory authorities informed.

If deemed necessary and appropriate, a grievance hearing date will be scheduled and all parties are required to appear in front of the grievance committee.

Prior to the hearing, the members to whom the grievance addresses will be afforded an opportunity to respond in writing, and this will be provided to all members of the grievance committee as well as to the member who filled the grievance.

The time interval for the written responses will be established at the time that the hearing date is scheduled.

If the grievance committee finds the accused member guilty of a violation, they may recommend a penalty for the misconduct to the club chairperson.

Disciplinary action will be determined on a case by case basis.

Guinness Rugby Football Club values its members and believes that immediate termination of membership is appropriate only in serious cases of misconduct.

Guinness Rugby Football Club general policy is to correct misconduct before it rises to a level requiring discharge.

Accordingly Guinness Rugby Football Club has the option of using the following progressive discipline process:

1. Verbal warning
2. Written reprimand
3. Suspension and or termination of membership

Because some misconduct warrants skipping steps in the process, Guinness Rugby Football Club reserves the right to immediately terminate a membership or skip any steps in the progressive discipline process.

The decision of the grievance committee may be appealed to the Club President, who's decision is final.

Dealing with Suspected Abuse

Reporting abuse

If there are grounds for concern (See Appendix 2) about the safety or welfare of a young player you should react to the concern. If unsure about whether or not certain behaviours are abusive (Appendix 3) and therefore reportable, you should contact the duty social worker in the Local Health Board or Social Services Department where you will receive advice. Grounds for concern include a specific indication from a player, a statement from a person who witnessed abuse or an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse.

Steps for reporting suspected abuse

Observe and note dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information.

Report the matter as soon as possible to the designated officer within the club responsible for reporting abuse, e.g. Child Welfare Officer. If the Child Welfare Officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the player has been abused or is at risk of abuse, s/he will make a report to the Health Board/Social Services who have statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse

In cases of emergency, where a player appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Children's Officer is unable to contact a duty social worker, the Garda Authorities should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a player be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities.

If the Child Welfare Officer is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist s/he can informally consult with the local health board/social services. S/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report.

Any Child Welfare Officer reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the Statutory Authorities should first inform the family of their intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the player or undermine an investigation

Response to a young player

When a young player discloses information of suspected abuse you should:

3. Deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive and competent way through listening to and facilitating the player to tell about the problem, rather than interviewing about details of what happened.
4. Stay calm and not show any extreme reaction to what the player is saying.
5. Listen compassionately, and take what the player is saying seriously.
6. Understand that the player has decided to tell something very important and has taken a risk to do so.
7. The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the player will not mind talking to those involved in the investigation.
8. Be honest with the player and tell them that it is not possible to keep this information a secret
9. Make no judgmental statements against the person whom the allegation is made
10. Not question the player unless the nature of what he/she is saying is unclear. Leading questions should be avoided. Open, non-specific questions should be used such as "Can you explain to me what you mean by that"
11. Check out the concerns with the parents/guardians before making a report unless doing so would endanger the player

12. Give the player some indication of what would happen next, such as informing parents/guardians, Health Board or Social Services. It should be kept in mind that the player may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage.
13. Carefully record the details
14. Pass on this information to the designated officer within the Club, the Child Welfare Officer.
15. Always reassure the player that they have done the right thing in telling you

Allegation against Coaches / Mentors

If an allegation of alleged child abuse is made against a coach/mentor working within Guinness RFC, the following procedures should be followed:

The reporting procedure in respect of suspected child abuse
The procedure for dealing with the mentor

The safety of the player making the allegation should be considered and the safety of any other players who may be at risk. Guinness Rugby Football Club should take any necessary steps that may be necessary to protect its players.

The issue of confidentiality is important - the coach/mentor should be treated with respect and fairness.

Dealing with the Mentor

While the designated Children's Officer makes the report to the local Health Board, the President of Guinness RFC should deal with the coach/mentor. The Chairperson should privately inform the coach / mentor that:

- 1) an allegation has been made against him / her
- 2) the nature of the allegation.

He / she should be afforded an opportunity to respond
His / her response should be noted and passed on to the Health Board/Social Services

The coach / mentor should be asked to step aside pending the outcome of the investigation.

When a coach / mentor is asked to step aside it should be made clear that it is only a precautionary measure and will not prejudice any later disciplinary proceedings

Guinness Rugby Club's Child Welfare Officer should inform the Branch Welfare Officer that the coach / mentor has been asked to stand aside and is under investigation by a statutory authority.

The IRFU and Guinness Rugby Football Club can consider disciplinary action on the coach / mentor, but should ensure that this does not interfere with the investigation of the Statutory Authorities - the outcome of the investigation and any implications it might have will be considered during the Disciplinary procedure.

It should be noted that the fact that the alleged abuser has not been prosecuted or been found guilty does not mean that they are appropriate to work with young people in the future.

False Allegations

The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to the Health Board or the Gardaí. The act also covers the offence of 'false reporting'.

The main provisions of the Act are:

- 1) The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse "reasonably and in good faith" to designated officers of Health Boards or any member of An Garda Síochána
- 2) The provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including dismissal
- 3) The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities "knowing that statement to be false". This is a new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in cases of abuse, welfare or bad practice. It is important that the rights of both the player and the person about whom the complaint has been made are protected.

The following points should be kept in mind:

- 1) A guarantee of confidentiality or undertakings regarding secrecy cannot be given, as the welfare of the player will supersede all other considerations
- 2) All information should be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should be discussed only with those who need to know
- 3) Information should be conveyed to the parents / guardians of the player in a sensitive way about whom there are concern
- 4) Giving information to others on a 'need to know' basis for the protection of a player is not a breach of confidentiality
- 5) All persons involved in a protection process (the player, his/ her parents/ guardians, the alleged offender, his/her family, mentors) should be afforded appropriate respect, fairness, support and confidentiality at all stages of the procedure
- 6) Information should be stored in a secure place, with limited access to designated people
- 7) The requirements of the Data Protection laws should be adhered to
- 8) Breach of confidentiality is a serious matter

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints can be difficult to deal with but should not be ignored. In all cases the safety and welfare of the player/s is paramount. Any such complaints relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the Child Welfare Officer. The information should be checked out and handled in a confidential manner.

Rumors

Rumours should not be allowed to hang in the air. Any rumours relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the Child Welfare Officer and checked out without delay.

Appendices

1. *Anti-Bullying Policy*

This is adapted from the Scout Association of Ireland's Child Protection Policy

What is Bullying?

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others.

It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly in social environments such as schools, clubs and other organisations working with young people. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting and extortion behaviour by one or more players against a victim.

How would you know if a player is being bullied?

All bullies operate using furtiveness, threats and fear. Bullying can therefore only survive in an environment where the victim does not feel empowered to tell someone who can help or in which it is not safe to do so.

The following indicators are warning signs that a young person might be getting bullied:

- Reluctance to come to a venue or take part in activities
- Physical signs (unexplained bruises, scratches, or damage to belongings)
- Stress-caused illness – headaches, and stomach aches which seem unexplained
- Fearful behaviour (fear of walking to a meeting, going different routes, asking to be driven)
- Frequent loss of, or shortage of, money with vague explanations
- Having few friends
- Changes in behaviour (withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, upset, distressed)
- Not eating
- Attempting suicide or hinting at suicide
- Anxiety (shown by nail-biting, fearfulness, tics)
- There are other possible reasons for many of the above

Who should deal with bullying?

While the more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and are reported to the health board or An Garda Síochána, dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of all Coaches/Mentors within the Guinness Rugby Football Club

How can it be prevented?

- Ensure that all members follow the code of conduct, which promotes the rights and dignity of each member.
- Deal with any incidents as they arise.
- Use a whole group policy or 'no-blame approach', i.e., not 'bullying the bully' but working with bullies and the group of young people, helping them to understand the hurt they are causing, and so make the problem a 'shared concern' of the group, (see below)
- Reinforce that there is 'a permission to tell' culture rather than a 'might is right'
- Encourage young people to negotiate, co-operative and help others, particularly new or different people
- Offer victim immediate support and put the 'no blame approach' into operation
- Never tell a young person to ignore bullying, they can't ignore it, it hurts too much

- Never encourage a young person to take the law into their own hands and beat the bully at their own game
- Tell the victim there is nothing wrong with them and it is not their fault

'No Blame' Approach

Step 1 – Interview with the victim

If you find that there has been an incident of bullying, first talk to the victim. At this stage find out who was involved and what the victim is now feeling. Try asking the following questions:

- Was it verbal or physical intimidation?
- How hurt is the victim
- Was it within his/her own peer group?
- Ensure the victim that his/her name will not come out in the investigation
- Actively listen

Step 2 – Meet with all involved

- Arrange to meet with all those involved; this should include some bystanders, those who may have colluded, those who joined in and those who initiated the bullying.
- Have a maximum of six to eight in the group – keep the number controllable
- Make a point of calling a 'special' meeting
- Ensure the severity of the topic is understood by all
- Speak only of the hurt caused in general terms with no reference to the victim
- Play on the conscience of all – ask questions like: How would you feel? Would you like it done to you?

Step 3 – Explain the problem

The distress being suffered as a result of the bullying incident is explained. At this stage the details of the incident or the allocation of the blame is not discussed. Explain the feelings of loneliness, feeling left out, rejected, laughed at. Try asking questions:

- Would they like it if it happened to them
- "Someone here in this group was bullied by someone within the group, what could we do to see it does not happen again?"
- Listen, watch out for reactions, and pick up on any without isolating anyone

Step 4 – Share the responsibility

Explain what steps / controls may have to be introduced to prevent further incidents and how everyone will loose out as a result

Step 5 – Ask the group for their ideas

At this stage the group is encouraged to suggest ways that would make the victim feel happier. All positive responses are noted. Use phrases "if it were you" to encourage a response. Listen to all suggestions and note them

Step 6 – Leave it to them

Now the problem has been identified, solutions suggested, the problem is now handed over to the group to solve. Arrange to meet again in a week's time. Pass responsibility over to the group and give a time frame within which something must be done

Step 7 – Meet them again

Each member of the group, including the bully, discuss how things are going, who is doing what and have there been other incidents. This allows for continual monitoring and also keeps all involved in the process.

Again enforce the idea of the 'team' looking after each other at regular intervals to ensure it is known that bullying or intimidating behaviour will not be tolerated.

2. Grounds for Concern

Examples of reasonable grounds are:

1. a specific indication from a player that she has been abused
2. a statement from a person who witnessed abuse
3. an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse
4. a symptom which may not itself be totally consistent with abuse, but which is supported by corroborative evidence of deliberate harm or negligence
5. Consistent signs of neglect over a period of time

In some cases of child abuse the alleged perpetrator will also be a young person and it is important that behaviour of this nature is not ignored.

Grounds for concern will exist in cases where there is an age difference and/ or difference in power, status or intellect between the children involved.

However, it is important to distinguish between normal sexual behaviour and abusive behaviour.

Persons unsure about whether or not certain behaviours are abusive and therefore reportable, should contact the duty social worker in the local Health Board or Social Services department where they will receive advice.

3. Categories of Abuse

1. Neglect
2. Emotional Abuse
3. Physical Abuse
4. Sexual Abuse

1. Neglect

Neglect is normally defined in terms of omission, where a young person suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or medical care. It may also include neglect of a young person's basic emotional needs.

Neglect usually becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. For instance, a young person who suffers a series of minor injuries is not having her needs for supervision and safety met. The threshold of significant harm is reached when the young person's needs are neglected to the extent that his/her well being and/or development is severely affected.

2. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between an adult and a young person rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It is rarely manifested in terms of physical symptoms.

Examples of emotional abuse include

- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming
- Where the level of care is conditional on her behaviour
- Unresponsiveness, inconsistent or unrealistic expectations of a young person
- Premature imposition of responsibility on the young person
- Over or under protection of the young person
- Failure to provide opportunities for the child's education and development
- Use of unrealistic or over-harsh disciplinary measures
- Exposure to domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose children to emotional abuse

3. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury that causes significant harm to a young person, including:

- Shaking, hitting or throwing
- Use of excessive force in handling
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation or drowning
- Munchausen's syndrome by proxy (where parents/ guardians fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness.
- Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a young person
- For young people with disabilities it may include confinement to a room or cot, or incorrectly given drugs to control behaviour
- Burning or scalding

4. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a young person is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others.

For example:

- Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a young person
- Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a young person whether by person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- Masturbation in the presence of a young person or involvement of the child in the act of masturbation
- Sexual intercourse with the young person, whether oral, vaginal or anal
- Sexual exploitation of a young person
- It may include non-contact activities, such as involving young people in looking at pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.