



## **Keeping Children Safe in Rugby**

### **Best Practice**

Chobham Rugby'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 Club which may be harmful to a child or vulnerable adult in their care must be reported to the RFU Safeguarding Team through Chobham Rugby's Safeguarding Officer.

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.

### **Environment**

As a year round sport weather conditions present all rugby clubs with a range of considerations: extremes of heat, sun, rain, frost and snow. It is the responsibility of Chobham Rugby to carry out a risk assessment of the environmental conditions both before and during a game or training session. Conditions such as frost and drought can result in a hard and dangerous playing surface. Children and vulnerable adults will always be advised to wear appropriate clothing for the season and all players will be monitored to ensure their wellbeing throughout a session. All players will be encouraged to keep hydrated throughout a session particularly during the warmer months.

### **Frequency of Play**

Chobham Rugby recognises that the RFU take overplaying and over commitment seriously, especially where it relates to players under the age of 18. The RFU's Regulation 15 (See annex one) and its guidelines identify the parameters in relation to the amount of time any player is playing or training. Rugby is only part of a child's development and should always be balanced alongside other academic and sporting commitments.

### **Playing Kit and Equipment**

IRB Law 4 details the definition of playing kit and also goes on to regulate for any additional items of clothing including pads, mits, medical support and mouthguards. It also goes on to identify banned items of clothing such as jewellery, sharp items and zips. Ultimately, it is the referee's decision to determine whether any item of the players' clothing is acceptable or not and his decision is final.

*Names on shirts:* there are no RFU regulations governing the appearance of players' names or nick names on their kit. However, it is considered poor practice to do so as it allows the child or vulnerable adult to be easily identified by those to whom the child or vulnerable adult is otherwise, unknown.



*Mouthguards:* whilst the wearing of a mouthguard is not mandatory, it is a recommendation that all age grade players wear one. It is, however, mandatory in certain competitions and festivals.

*Studs and Blades:* these must not be sharp or abrasive. It is the referee's decision as to whether or not a player's studs, or blades, are acceptable. It is advisable for players to have boots with interchangeable studs so that they may be replaced if they become worn or dangerous.

*Goggles/glasses:* players may not wear glasses whilst playing. Only players in the U7s and U8s age group may wear glasses or goggles. RFU Regulation 15 sets out the parameters in detail. Contact lenses may be worn.

This is currently under review. Please refer to the RFU Website for the most up-to-date information regarding the wearing of goggles

*Hearing aids:* whilst contrary to IRB Laws of the Game, the RFU provide detailed guidance on the issue of hearing aids and cochlear implants. This can be found on the RFU website and Chobham Rugby will adhere to this guidance.

## **Under 6's**

Chobham Rugby does provide the opportunity for under 6's to participate in rugby related activities and therefore ensures the following additional factors:

- All parents/guardians *must* remain on the premises throughout a session
- Activities are located within easy reach of shelter and toilets.
- A session will not exceed one hour and there will be at least one break for refreshments.
- Coaches will be alert to the mental and physical capabilities of the individual children involved and will be prepared to adapt/curtail sessions in the event that the children become tired or lose concentration.
- Whilst all children will normally start activities at the same time, their parents/guardians will be instructed that they may withdraw them at any time during the session.
- Where there is a wide range of children they will be matched to activities according to age and development. The format of any session will be designed to give these children confidence in carrying out basic movement skills, in the context of fair play, sharing and co-operation. Children need to spend time learning how the game works and its laws, so they become familiar and confident with the game before joining those who are more experienced.
- The group will be functionally separate from all other age groups and no matches may be played between the children and those of different clubs.



## Supervision

To provide a safe environment, clubs should ensure that their volunteers and employees when working with children avoid working in isolation out of the sight of parents or other volunteers. While volunteers and employees are awaiting their DBS disclosure they must be supervised by someone who does have DBS clearance. Risk assessments should be undertaken to determine whether it is appropriate for a person to commence working with children prior to receipt of the DBS disclosure and what level of supervision is appropriate. They should not work without supervision at any time until their DBS has been cleared by the RFU and they have a green “current” marker on the Game Management System.

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 DBS checked adults. However, in an emergency, the first attention must be paid to an injured player and if there are insufficient suitably DBS checked adults available to supervise the remaining players, clearly, other responsible adults will need to be asked to step in.

Parents/carers should be advised that it is not acceptable to drop children off at a club without any adult supervision.

### Adult: Child Ratios

There should always be at least one DBS checked adult in charge of any group of children.

The RFU recommends a minimum ratio of adult to children of:

1:10 for children over 8 years old aged at least 9
1:8 for children under 8 years old aged 7 and 8
1:6 for children under 7 years old



## **On Tour**

This policy applies equally on tour as at the club. When on tour if an adult is solely there supporting their own child they will not need DBS 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.

[Touring with children.pdf \(englandrugby.com\)](#)

## **Good Role Models**

The children's 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 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, attempt to buy, 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; or
- 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 in their care.

## Contact Rugby

The wellbeing and safety of children 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 (see [englandrugby.com](http://englandrugby.com) for further information). 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 contact between adults and children 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
- the reasons for physical contact should be explained wherever practical so that children and their parents are comfortable with this approach
- do not proceed with the action or consider alternatives if the child appears to be apprehensive or reluctant, or if there are other concerns about the child's likely reaction
- the activity should always be conducted in an open environment and in the presence of another 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 among the players, both on and off the field. Penalising 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.

Physical intervention should only take place when it is absolutely necessary to prevent a child being hurt.

In these situations it is imperative to:

- consider your own safety
- give verbal instructions first
- use the minimum reasonable force to resolve the incident
- 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 any 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 Initial Issue/Concern Reporting Form](#)

Physical intervention, often referred to in education as 'Positive Handling', should only be used to achieve an outcome that is in the best interests of children, such as to prevent children from hurting themselves or others. It must never be used as a form of punishment.



## Changing Rooms and Showers

Adults and children must never use the same changing or wash room facilities at Chobham Rugby Club or other clubs or venues to shower or change at the same time. Where 17 year old children are playing in the adult game they should be offered separate changing and shower facilities.

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

If children need supervising in changing rooms, or coaches or managers need to carry out a range of tasks in that environment this must involve two individuals cleared to work in Regulated Activity of the same gender as the children. For mixed gender activities separate changing and wash room facilities should be available. If the same changing and wash room facilities must be used by adults and children on the same day a clear timetable should be established. No pressure should be placed on children 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 child concerned and their parents/carers 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/carers and the child themselves if they are of sufficient maturity to consent.



## Transportation

In most instances it is the responsibility of parents/carers, not the club, to transport their child to and from the club or nominated meeting point. If parents/carers make arrangements between themselves this is a private arrangement and at the parents'/carers' discretion. 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/carer who has reason to contact them.

If the Chobham Rugby Club formally arranges transport e.g. using minibuses or people carriers (as opposed to facilitating travel arrangements between parents/ carers) 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/carers give their consent and have the driver's contact details, with the driver having easy access to parents'/carers' contact details including mobile phone numbers
- no child is left alone in the car with the driver, unless it is the adult's own child. If, in extenuating circumstances, this situation arises the child 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.

In the event of a late collection of children, coaches and volunteers should:

- attempt to contact the parents/carers;
- wait with the child, preferably in the company of others;
- notify the CSO/club official; and
- remind parents/carers of their responsibility to collect their child promptly.



## **Children playing in adults game**

In accordance with the RFU Regulation 15, a male or female player can, with the necessary written consent, play in the adult game when he/she reaches his/her 17th birthday provided:

- they have been assessed as capable of playing with adults;
- the RFU's Playing Adult Rugby Form has been duly completed and signed; and
- the player does not train or play in the front row of the contested scrum. Once a player has reached the age of 18, the player may play in any position.

Please refer to Regulation 15 for more information:

[RFU Memo Template \(englandrugby.com\)](http://englandrugby.com)

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. The RFU Playing Adult Rugby Form must be completed and kept secure by the player's club.

## **Children playing up or playing down in age groups**

Please refer to Regulation 15 for more information:

[RFU Memo Template \(englandrugby.com\)](http://englandrugby.com)