



Portadown Rugby Football Club

Child Protection Policy



PRFC – Child Protection Policy

Introduction

Everyone who participates in rugby is entitled to do so in a safe and enjoyable environment. Portadown Rugby Football Club (hereafter the “Club”) has a moral and legal obligation to protect the welfare and well being of all children who come under their protection at any time.

The aim of this policy is to promote good practice and outline procedures which show the club how to deal with incidents that we become aware of at any time whilst in contact with a child. It also will also protect the parents, volunteers, coaches and club members. It will also allow staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (Children’s Act 1989)

Policy Statement

The Club is committed to the following:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- All children whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in rugby in safe and fun environment
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings
- All suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- All involved in the club and who work with children, will be recruited with regard to their suitability for that responsibility and will be provided with guidance and training in good practice and child protection procedures
- Working in partnership with parents and children is essential for the protection of children



PRFC – Child Protection Statement

Portadown Rugby Football Club

- aims to create an enjoyable environment for all children who wish to take part in rugby, other sports and social activities at the club
- emphasise that children have the right to be safe, secure and free from threat
- acknowledge that children have the right to be treated with respect and for their concerns to be listened to and acted upon
- will ensure that all non adult members have specific facilities designated for them with adequate supervision
- have procedures in place to help any child who requests help and support on a confidential basis, in issues relating to child protection
- will ensure that any club members, coaches and volunteers working with children are aware of and apply the Codes of Practice and IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document

The Club has one officer who is specifically responsible for Child Welfare.

He is Mervyn Gill

His role is to:-

- Oversee all staff, coaches, members and volunteers and understand and follow the child protection policy and IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document
- Offer advice and make all involved more confident and aware of any situations that they may need to deal with
- Offer parents / guardians advice and support as necessary and appropriate
- Follow strict procedures in any allegations are made about staff, coaches, members, volunteers or parents / guardians
- Observe children about whom he becomes concerned
- Inform the relevant agencies / persons when investigations are being carried out
- Ensure children remain within a loving, caring environment whilst in the Club's care
- Apply vetting procedure when appropriate (anyone with significant access)



PRFC – Guidelines for working with children

Introduction

To provide children with the best possible experience and opportunities in rugby, everyone must operate within an accepted ethical framework. The club has implemented some clear policies and procedures to address Child Welfare and Best Practice.

Many may consider that only rugby coaches need help and advice. However it is important that club officials, tournament organisers, volunteers and any others who meet and work with children through rugby have clear guidelines and information to help them and importantly, the children whom they come into contact through rugby.

The role of the coach is one of great responsibility and all coaches are expected to behave accordingly.

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse. It is therefore NOT the responsibility of participants in rugby to make judgements.

It is their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and act if they have concerns about the welfare of the child.

Good Practice

All personnel should adhere to the following principles and action:

- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets)
- Make the experience of rugby fun and enjoyable: promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying
- Treat all children equally and with respect and dignity
- Always put the welfare of the child first, before winning
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with players (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them)
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with children. Where any form of manual/physical support is required it should be provided openly and with the consent of the child. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the child's consent has been given



- Involve parents / guardians wherever possible, e.g. where children need to be supervised in changing rooms, encourage parents to take responsibility for their own child. If groups have to be supervised in changing rooms always ensure parents, coaches etc work in pairs
- Request written parental consent if club officials are required to transport children in their cars
- Gain written parental consent for any significant travel arrangements e.g. overnight stays
- Ensure that if mixed teams are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff
- Ensure that at away events adults should not enter a child's room or invite a child to their rooms
- Be an excellent role model, this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children
- Always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of a child and refrain from sacrificing welfare in a desire for club or personal achievements. This means avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will
- Secure written parental consent for the club to act *in loco parentis*, to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises. This includes emergency contact details for parent or guardian
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given. Nominate a club first aid officer to carry out this task and keep records.

Poor Practice

The following are regarded as poor practice and should be avoided by all personnel

- Unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others
- Taking children alone on car journeys, however short
- Taking children to your home where they will be alone with you



- Sharing a room with a child
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- Allowing children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- Reducing a child to tears as a form of control
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature that the child can do for themselves

Where cases arise where it is impossible to avoid certain situations e.g. transporting a child in your car, the tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding of the parent / guardian and the child involved.

If during your care you accidentally hurt a child, the child seems distressed in any manner, or if the child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report any such incidents as soon as possible to the club Child Welfare Officer and make a written note of it. Parents / guardians should also be informed of the incident.

Physical Contact in Rugby

Many sports including rugby, by their nature require a degree of physical contact between adults and children. Physical contact can be used appropriately to instruct, encourage, protect or comfort. The aims of guidelines relating to physical contact are to provide adults and children with appropriate types and contexts for touching

Physical contact between adults and children should only be used when the aim is to:

- Develop sports skills or techniques
- Treat an injury
- Prevent an injury
- Meet the requirements of the particular sport



Physical contact should:

- Not involve touching inappropriate bodily areas
- Meet the need of the child and not of the adult
- Be fully explained to the child and with the exception of an emergency, permission should be sought
- Not take place in secret or out of site of other adults

As previously stated records of injuries should be fully documented

Defining Child Abuse

There are five main types of abuse:

- **Physical**
- **Sexual**
- **Emotional**
- **Bullying**
- **Neglect**

The abuser may be a family member, someone the child encounters in residential care or in the community, another child, a person in a position of power or within the rugby environment.

Any individual may abuse a child directly or may be indirectly responsible by failing to prevent another person harming a child

Abuse in all of its forms can affect a child at any age. The effects can be so damaging that if not treated, may follow the individual into adulthood

Children with disabilities may be at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and a powerlessness to protect themselves or adequately communicate that abuse has occurred.



Physical Abuse

Physical abuse covers a wide range of injuries that could lead to short/long term effects in the child's health and their overall well-being.

Such injuries can be caused in a number of ways:

Hitting	Shaking	Squeezing	Burning/scalding
Biting	Drugs	Poison	Alcohol
Suffocation	Drowning	Neglect	Other children

Signs and Symptoms

- Unexplained injuries or burns
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Reluctance to discuss injuries
- Admission of punishment which appears excessive
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Arms and legs kept covered even in hot weather
- Fear of returning home
- Fear of medical help
- Self destructive tendencies
- Aggression towards others
- Running away

In a sports situation, physical abuse may occur when the nature and intensity of training disregard the capacity of the child's immature and developing body.



Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is when an adult uses a child to meet their own sexual needs. There are a number of ways in which an adult may do this:

Sexual intercourse	Masturbation
Anal intercourse	Oral sex
Fondling	Showing pornographic material
Talking to children in a sexually explicit manner	

Signs and Symptoms

- Having soreness or bleeding in the genital or anal areas or throat
- Regression to a much younger behavioural pattern
- Behaving in a way sexually inappropriate to their age and being obsessed with sexual matters, as opposed to normal exploration
- Staring blankly, seeming to be unhappy confused or sad
- Appearing to be worried or bothered but unwilling to talk
- Becoming aggressive and hurtful

Sports activities which might involve physical contact with children could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Also the power of the coach over young athletes, if misused may lead to abusive situations developing.



Emotional Abuse

This can be where another person is hostile or rejects a child to such an extent that a child's behaviour and development are impaired

Emotional abuse can be hard to detect as the abuse is 'on the inside' i.e. in the mind of the abused child. This type of abuse can involve the child being told the following;

You are stupid

You are ugly

You are worthless

All of the above leave the child a feeling of being unwanted.

It may feature expectations of children that are not appropriate to their age or development

Signs and Symptoms

- Physical, mental and/or emotional lags in their development
- Overreaction to their own mistakes
- Fear of new situations
- Be extremely passive or aggressive
- Fear of being shouted at
- Very withdrawn

Children who are abused in any form are also emotionally abused

Emotional abuse in sport may occur when the child is constantly criticised, given negative feedback, expected to perform at levels that are above their capability. Other forms of emotional abuse could take the form of name calling or bullying.



Neglect

Neglect means there is a failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs which are a failing to provide:

Adequate food and water
Shelter
Stimulation
Appropriate clothing
Love
Cleanliness
Protection from physical harm or danger
Adequate medical care

Signs and Symptoms

- Sudden weight loss
- Bedwetting / regression
- Eating problems (overeating / constant appetite)
- Dirty, smelly and poorly dressed
- Unusual tiredness
- Emaciation
- Poor social relationships
- Untreated medical problems
- Neurotic behaviour
- Destructive tendencies
- Low self esteem

Neglect in sport could occur when a coach fails to keep a child safe, or exposing them to undue cold /heat or unnecessary risk of injury.



Bullying

This may come from another child or an adult. Bullying is defined as deliberate hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves.

There are four main types of bullying:

Physical – hitting, slapping, kicking

Emotional – tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating

Verbal – racist or homophobic remarks, name calling, threatening, abusive texts

Sexual – Unwanted physical contact, abusive comments of a sexual nature

Signs and Symptoms

- Limited progress
- Easily distressed, cries easily
- Aggressive and disruptive
- Suicidal and running away
- Secretive
- Possessions damaged or missing
- Stops eating and/or eating disorders
- Money 'lost'
- Stealing (to pay bullies)
- Insomnia and headaches
- Self-harm
- Bites and bruises

In sport bullying may arise when a parent or coach pushes the child too hard to succeed or a rival athlete or official uses bullying behaviour.

PRFC has a separate Anti-bullying Policy



Other indicators which may relate to any type of abuse

- Bewilderment – why?
- Poor self esteem
- Regression
- Elective mutism – shock reaction or conscious choice
- Self mutilation
- Depression
- Fear of adults
- Para-suicide
- Disassociation
- Model child
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Irrational fears
- Abrupt behavioural changes
- Evidence or disclosure of S.T.D. symptoms
- Alcohol and/or drug abuse
- Precocious interest in sex
- Soiling and/or wetting pants
- O.C.D.
- Stealing
- Development of tic or stammer



Action required if you identify concerns or signs of abuse

All of these signs/symptoms are indicative of possible abuse but are often able to be rationalised. They should not be taken in isolation e.g. a child may appear unkempt but be cheerful, outgoing and otherwise bright and healthy. There may be other circumstances surrounding poor personal hygiene.

If you/we suspect that a child is being abused then you/we should inform the Child Welfare Officer within the club who will discuss the problem, possible explanations, reasonable steps to be taken and if appropriate then observe the child.

Sometimes a child may give an indication that they want to talk and it is then important to follow a number of principles. It is important that any disclosure is dealt with correctly so the following procedure should be implemented.

- Stay calm and assure the child
- For a child to disclose it takes great courage, however they are telling you because they want your help for the abuse to stop. Don't make promises of confidentiality but explain that you will need to contact other professionals who will be able to give the help which is needed.
- You must listen to what the child says and not suggest ideas. Keep questions to a minimum, use open questions and record what has been said as soon as possible. It is very important to record the exact words as spoken by the child. Record the facts not the opinions.
- Report the incident to the Child Welfare Officer immediately. If further action is required the Child Welfare Officer will follow the appropriate protocols. If the child is in danger the PSNI and Social Services will be contacted immediately.
- It is very important that the matter is treated with the utmost confidentiality and under no circumstances approach the alleged offender.



Procedure for allegations of abuse against a member of staff, coach or volunteer

Procedure for parents

- If during your child's time with the Club they make an allegation of abuse against a member of staff, coach or volunteer, you have the choice of informing the Child Welfare Officer initially or alternatively to report the matter to the PSNI or Social Services.
- You are requested to make your allegation in writing
- All complaints will be taken very seriously and investigated fully by the Club, Branch and IRFU and the PSNI and Social Services if required. You will be kept fully informed throughout the investigation and of the outcome

Procedure for staff

- If you are concerned about another member of staff, coach or volunteer and their relationship or behaviour towards a child or children you should contact the Child Welfare Officer within the club and express your concerns
- Any such matters will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.

Disciplinary Procedures

- Poor Practice incidents will be dealt with internally within the club and Ulster Branch informed.
- Unlawful incidents will be reported directly to the PSNI and Social Services. The Ulster Branch will be informed on a 'need to know' basis.
- The local authority will investigate any unlawful incident and inform the IRFU
- If there is no prosecution the IRFU may instigate its' own disciplinary procedures.



PRFC – Use of images of children

Key Concerns

The key concerns regarding the use of images of children relate to:

Humans Right Act 1998 – Article 8 ‘Right to Privacy’

- The possible identification of children when a photograph is accompanied by personal information.
- The inappropriate use, adaptation or copying of images for use on a child pornography or illegal website.
- The taking of inappropriate photographs or recorded images of children.

Guidelines for Photographic/Recorded Images

- Ensure parents/guardians/children have granted their consent for the taking and publication of photographic images.
- All children featured in recordings must be appropriately dressed with outer clothing garments covering torso from at least the bottom of their neck to their thighs (i.e. a minimum of shirt and shorts).
- The photograph or recording should focus on the activity rather than a particular young person and personal details which might make the young person vulnerable, such as their exact address should not be revealed.
- The Club should be allowed to use video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid and means of recording special occasions however care should be taken in the dissemination and storage of the material.
- You should not use any images of a child who is the subject of any court order or who has denied you their consent.
- Parents and spectators taking photographs/recordings should be prepared to identify themselves if requested and state their purpose for photography/filming.
- Any instances of the use of inappropriate images should be reported to the Child Welfare Officer of the club or the PSNI.



Guidelines for Publishing Photographic/Recorded Images

- If a photograph is used, avoid naming the child or use their first name only. Personal details of children such as an email address, home address and telephone numbers should never be revealed on a website or in print.
- Think about the level of consideration that you give to the use of images in all publications, for example the process used in choosing photographs for a publicity brochure for the Club. Apply an increased level of consideration to the images of children used on websites.



PRFC – Guidelines for Responsible Adults on trips away with children

1. You have an ethical ‘duty of care’ as well as legal responsibility under the Children Act for the safety and well-being of the children at all times. Do not take your responsibility lightly. You are not on holiday, but on duty 24 hours a day.
2. Responsible adults must have been vetted through Access NI and should ensure they are fully aware of the Child Protection Policy and IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document and abide by them.
3. Disciplinary measures may at times be necessary, and such procedures must be conducted with fairness. Firm guidelines for behaviour, curfews, rendezvous times, etc. must be laid down clearly to the participants, so that they know what is expected of them at all times.
4. Participants and parents should have read and signed the relevant Code of Conduct and consent forms for the trip.
5. Be aware at all times of possible tensions within the group. Rugby is a competitive sport which may lead to bullying.
6. A staffing ratio of adults to participants of 1:10 maximum must be adhered to at all times. If there are participants of both sexes on the trip, the responsible adults should be one of each sex as a minimum. At least one adult should be trained in First Aid.
7. Boys and girls must be in separate sleeping quarters and children must not share rooms with adults.
8. At least one of the responsible adults should be with the children at all times during the day.
9. The responsible adults should lead by example and reasonable standards of behaviour upheld by all on the trip. Responsible adults must refrain from consuming alcohol at all times. Remember you are representing your club.
10. Insurance documents should be carried by the lead adult at all times in case of accident.
11. The lead adult should carry, or have access to extra funds in case of any emergency.



Useful Telephone Numbers

PRFC Child Welfare Officer	Mervyn Gill	07815590466
PRFC Youth Rugby Chairman	Willie Gribben	07739044084
Portadown PSNI		028 38325144
Craigavon Area Hospital		028 38334444
Brown low Health & Social Services Child Protection		028 38343011
IRFU (Ulster Branch) Child Welfare Officer	Brian Maltman	028 90493111
IRFU Dublin		00353 16473800