

TOR RUGBY CLUB

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN & VULNERABLE PEOPLE POLICY

Club Policy Document. Adopted by Tor Rugby Club Committee

Applicable to all Players, Parents, Coaches, Volunteers, Match Officials, and Committee Members

1. POLICY STATEMENT & CORE PRINCIPLES

1. **Paramountcy of Welfare:** Tor Rugby Club acknowledges its duty of care and responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and vulnerable adults involved in rugby union activities at the club. The welfare of the child is, and must always remain, paramount to all other considerations.
2. **Adherence to RFU Regulations:** Tor Rugby Club strictly adheres to the Rugby Football Union (RFU) Safeguarding Policy, RFU Regulation 21 (Safeguarding), RFU Regulation 15 (Age Grade Rugby), and statutory guidance including “*Working Together to Safeguard Children*”. Tor Rugby Club endorses, adopts, and implements all procedures, guidelines, and codes of conduct published by the RFU.
3. **Equality & Inclusivity:** All participants—regardless of age, sex, gender identity, ability or disability, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, size, or shape—have an equal right to protection from abuse, exploitation, harm, and neglect.
4. **Safe & Positive Environment:** Tor Rugby Club is committed to providing a safe, positive, encouraging, and enjoyable environment where every child can develop rugby skills, confidence, and character. Safeguarding is the shared responsibility of everyone involved with the club in any capacity.
5. **Prompt & Fair Response:** All suspicions, concerns, or allegations of abuse, neglect, poor practice, or breach of conduct will be taken seriously, recorded accurately, and responded to swiftly, fairly, and appropriately in accordance with RFU protocols and statutory reporting requirements.
6. **Partnership Working:** Tor Rugby Club works in active partnership with the RFU Safeguarding Team, the Somerset County RFU Constituent Body Safeguarding Manager (CBSM), local statutory agencies (Somerset Children’s Social Care, Local Authority Designated Officer [LADO/DO], and Police), and parents/carers to promote child welfare.
7. **RFU Core Values:** Safeguarding protects and underpins the RFU Core Values across all age grades and senior sections:
 - **Teamwork**
 - **Respect**
 - **Enjoyment**
 - **Discipline**
 - **Sportsmanship**

2. DEFINITIONS & SCOPE

- **A Child:** Anyone under the age of 18 years engaged in any rugby union activity, match, training session, tour, or club event, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and UK law.
 - **Adult at Risk / Vulnerable Adult:** Any person aged 18 or over who has needs for care and support, is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, and as a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves against abuse or neglect.
 - **Children's Workforce:** Anyone working with children or young people at Tor Rugby Club in either a voluntary or paid capacity, including coaches, team managers, first aiders, referees, safeguarding officers, and committee members.
 - **Regulated Activity:** Any coaching, teaching, training, instruction, care, or supervision of children, carried out by the same person frequently (once a week or more), on 4 or more days in a 30-day period, or overnight, as defined under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012).
 - **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS):** The executive non-departmental public body that carries out criminal record checks and maintains the Children's and Adults' Barred Lists. (Replaced the historical CRB and ISA).
 - **RFU Regulation 21 (Safeguarding):** The mandatory RFU regulation governing safeguarding requirements, DBS vetting, reporting procedures, referral management, and interim suspensions/barring.
 - **RFU Regulation 15 (Age Grade Rugby):** The mandatory RFU regulation governing rules, age eligibility, cross-age play, and approvals required for 17-year-olds playing in the adult game.
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3. 17-YEAR-OLDS PLAYING OR TRAINING IN THE ADULT GAME

All players under the age of 18 are legally children and are covered by this policy. In accordance with **RFU Regulation 15:**

1. **Strict 18+ Rule for Front Row:** Under no circumstances may any player under the age of 18 play or train in the front row of a contested scrum in adult contact rugby.
2. **Approval Process for 17-Year-Olds:** A 17-year-old male or female player may only play or train in adult rugby if all of the following conditions are strictly met prior to participation:
 - A comprehensive assessment has been conducted confirming that the player is physically, emotionally, and intellectually capable of taking part in adult rugby;
 - Written agreement is obtained from the Club Safeguarding Officer and Director of Rugby / Club Coaching Coordinator;
 - Written consent is obtained from the player's parent or legal guardian;
 - The official **RFU Playing Adult Rugby Form** is fully completed, signed, and retained on record;

- Appropriate Constituent Body (Somerset RFU) and/or RFU approval has been confirmed as required by RFU regulations.
3. **Changing & Showering Safeguards:** 17-year-old players participating in adult fixtures or training must be offered separate changing and showering facilities from adult players. Adults and under-18s must never shower or change together in the same changing room at the same time.
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4. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Tor Rugby Club

- Formally adopts, publishes, and reviews this Safeguarding Policy annually.
- Appoints a qualified **Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO)** who is a member of, or reports directly to, the Club Executive Committee.
- Ensures all volunteers and coaches in Regulated Activity undergo mandatory Enhanced DBS vetting and RFU-approved safeguarding training before unsupervised activity.
- Completes the annual **RFU Safeguarding Self-Audit** on the RFU Game Management System (GMS).
- Ensures all club members, parents, coaches, and visitors have clear access to this policy, codes of conduct, and reporting contacts.

4.2 Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO)

- Acts as the primary, confidential first point of contact for any child welfare, protection, or poor practice concerns.
- Maintains up-to-date training by completing the RFU **“In Touch”** workshop within 6 months of appointment and keeping certification current.
- Manages the club’s DBS application process via the RFU GMS e-application portal.
- Refers all child protection concerns immediately to the Somerset RFU CB Safeguarding Manager (CBSM), the RFU Safeguarding Team, and/or statutory authorities (Somerset Children’s Social Care / Police).
- Supports children and families throughout any welfare or youth disciplinary proceedings.

4.3 Coaches, Team Managers & Volunteers

- Provide a safe, positive, encouraging, and respectful coaching environment reflecting the RFU Core Values.
- Complete an RFU Enhanced DBS check (with Children’s Barred List) through Tor Rugby Club and obtain clearance before taking up unsupervised duties.
- Attend the RFU **“Play It Safe”** safeguarding workshop and relevant age-appropriate coaching qualifications.
- Avoid one-to-one unobserved situations with children; ensure minimum supervision ratios and open environments.
- Immediately report any welfare concerns, disclosures, or suspicions of abuse to the CSO.

4.4 Parents, Guardians & Spectators

- Encourage children to play by the rules and respect teammates, opponents, coaches, and referees.
 - Ensure children are accompanied to sessions by a responsible adult (drop-and-go is not permitted for young age grades).
 - Provide up-to-date medical, emergency contact, and consent details upon registration on GMS.
 - Abide by the Tor Rugby Club and RFU Spectator Codes of Conduct and digital/photography policies.
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5. SAFER RECRUITMENT, VETTING & TRAINING

1. **Vetting Requirements:** In accordance with RFU Regulation 21, any individual carrying out or volunteering for Regulated Activity with children at Tor Rugby Club must undergo an **Enhanced DBS check with Children's Barred List check** processed through the club via the RFU GMS portal.
 2. **Pre-Clearance Supervision:** Volunteers awaiting DBS disclosure must not work alone or in unsupervised settings with children. They must be directly supervised by a fully cleared, DBS-checked coach until their DBS status shows green/current on GMS.
 3. **Reference Checks & Role Descriptions:** All new coaches and volunteers unknown to the club must provide references, which will be verified prior to appointment, alongside an agreed role remit.
 4. **Mandatory Training Standards:**
 - The **Club Safeguarding Officer** must attend the RFU *"In Touch"* workshop.
 - Every Mini and Youth age grade must have at least one coach/volunteer who has completed the RFU *"Play It Safe"* safeguarding course.
 - All coaches and pitchside first aiders must complete the RFU **HEADCASE** online concussion awareness module.
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6. RECOGNISING ABUSE, BULLYING & POOR PRACTICE

Abuse is any maltreatment of a child or vulnerable person by inflicting harm or failing to prevent harm. Tor Rugby Club recognises the four primary categories of abuse, alongside bullying and poor practice:

1. **Physical Abuse:** Inflicting physical harm or injury (e.g., hitting, shaking, forced physical punishment, forcing excessive training beyond physical capability, supplying performance-enhancing substances).
2. **Sexual Abuse:** Forcing, enticing, or grooming a child or vulnerable person into sexual activities, non-contact sexual acts, indecent imagery, sexualised comments, or online grooming.
3. **Emotional Abuse:** Persistent emotional maltreatment causing severe adverse effects on development (e.g., constant criticism, humiliation, scapegoating, extreme pressure to win, unjustified exclusion or isolation).

4. **Neglect:** Persistent failure to meet basic physical, emotional, or medical needs (e.g., leaving children unsupervised, exposing them to dangerous weather without proper clothing/warmth, ignoring obvious injuries or safety risks).
5. **Bullying & Cyberbullying:** Repeated hurtful, intimidating, or exclusionary behaviour (verbal, physical, emotional, or digital/social media). Bullying will not be tolerated and will be addressed immediately.
6. **Poor Practice:** Substandard coaching or supervisory conduct that compromises child welfare (e.g., shouting aggressively at children, creating divisive "elite" squads at early mini grades, ignoring safety guidelines, using foul language).

Children with Additional Needs or Disabilities

Tor Rugby Club recognises that children with additional needs, neurodivergence (e.g., autism, ADHD), or physical disabilities may face extra barriers in communicating concerns and may be disproportionately vulnerable. Coaches and volunteers will receive guidance to ensure an inclusive, supportive, and safe environment tailored to individual needs.

7. CODES OF CONDUCT & BEST PRACTICE STANDARDS

7.1 Supervision & Adult-to-Child Ratios

Every age grade session must have at least one DBS-cleared coach in charge, adhering to the RFU recommended minimum adult-to-child supervision ratios:

- **Under 7s (Cubs / U6 / U7):** Minimum 1 adult to 6 children (1:6)
- **Under 8s (U7 / U8):** Minimum 1 adult to 8 children (1:8)
- **Over 8s (U9 and above):** Minimum 1 adult to 10 children (1:10)
- A minimum of two responsible adults must be present at every training session and fixture.

7.2 Positions of Trust & Legal Boundaries

Under UK legislation (*Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022* amending the *Sexual Offences Act 2003*), sports coaches and club leaders who hold a position of trust, authority, or influence over young people aged 16 and 17 are legally prohibited from engaging in sexual relationships with them. Any breach constitutes a serious criminal offence, results in immediate suspension, and will be reported to the Police, DBS, and RFU Safeguarding Team.

7.3 Changing Room & Shower Policy

- **Strict Separation:** Adults and children (including 17-year-olds) must **never** use the same changing rooms or shower facilities at the same time.
- **Supervision:** If young children require supervision in changing areas, it must be carried out by two DBS-checked adults of the appropriate gender.
- **Mobile Phone Ban:** Mobile phones, cameras, or recording devices of any kind are **strictly prohibited** from being used in changing rooms and shower areas.

- **Home Changing:** Any child who feels uncomfortable using communal changing/shower facilities is fully supported to change and shower at home.

7.4 Contact Rugby & Safe Coaching

- **No Adult vs. Child Contact:** Adults and children must **never** engage in contact rugby drills, scrums, tackles, or contact matches against one another.
- **Touch / Tag:** Non-contact touch or tag rugby games involving adults and youth are permitted only when strictly managed with appropriate risk assessment.
- **Physical Handling:** Physical contact by coaches must only ever occur for safety reasons or direct technical correction with prior explanation to the player and in open view of other adults.

7.5 Physical Intervention (Positive Handling)

- Physical intervention must **only** take place in extreme circumstances where it is absolutely necessary to prevent immediate physical harm or injury to a child or another person.
- Verbal instructions must always be given first. If physical restraint is required, it must use the minimum reasonable force, avoid neck/head/intimate areas, and never be used as a punishment.
- Any physical intervention must be recorded immediately on an RFU Concern Form and reported to the CSO.

7.6 Electronic Communications & Social Media

- **Communication via Parents:** All team messages, schedules, fixtures, and logistics regarding children must be sent directly to parents/guardians (or parents copied/blind-copied for older youth teams).
- **No Private Messaging:** Coaches, team managers, and adult volunteers must **never** engage in private 1-to-1 digital messaging, texting, or direct messaging via social networks (WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.) with children.
- **Social Media:** Official club social media accounts are managed responsibly; no private or identifying personal data of children (such as full names linked to individual photos, school details, or addresses) may be published.

7.7 Photography & Video Recording

- Photography and video celebrating youth rugby and player development are welcomed, provided parental/guardian consent has been obtained during annual registration.
- Photographs must focus on the game and team spirit, ensuring appropriate dress and avoiding individual identifying captions (e.g., captioning "U11 squad at festival" rather than naming individual minors).
- Any concerns regarding unauthorised or inappropriate photography must be reported to the CSO or team coach immediately.

7.8 Transport & Tours

- **Transportation:** Parents/guardians are responsible for arranging transport for their children to and from the club and away fixtures. Private car sharing is an arrangement between parents.
- **Club-Organised Transport:** Where the club arranges official coaches/minibuses, vetted drivers, full insurance, passenger seatbelts, parental consent, and appropriate DBS-checked chaperones are mandatory.
- **Tours:** Any domestic or overseas youth tours must comply with the RFU “*Touring with Children*” guidance and obtain formal approval from the Club Executive Committee and Somerset RFU.

7.9 Alcohol, Smoking & Clubhouse Licensing

- It is illegal to sell alcohol to anyone under 18, or for adults to purchase alcohol on behalf of a minor.
 - Adults responsible for children or supervising teams must abstain from consuming alcohol during training sessions, matches, and youth activities.
 - Smoking and vaping are strictly prohibited pitchside and anywhere in the presence of children during youth sessions.
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8. PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH CONCERNS & DISCLOSURES

8.1 Immediate Principles on Receiving a Disclosure

- **STAY CALM & LISTEN:** Listen carefully with an open mind. Do not express shock, anger, or judgment.
 - **REASSURE:** Reassure the child that they were right to tell you and are not to blame.
 - **NO ABSOLUTE SECRECY:** Never promise complete confidentiality. Gently explain that you must pass the information to the Club Safeguarding Officer so that help and protection can be arranged.
 - **FEW QUESTIONS:** Do not interrogate or ask leading questions. Only clarify basic safety facts if essential.
 - **RECORD & SIGN:** Write down the facts immediately (date, time, exact words, who was present). Sign and date the document using full names, not initials.
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8.2 RFU Incident Reporting Decision Flow & Step-by-Step Guide

Step 1: Emergency & Urgent Medical Triage

- **Question:** Is the child in immediate physical danger or in need of urgent medical treatment?
 - **If YES:**
 1. Call Emergency Services immediately on **999** (Ambulance / Police).

2. Inform the emergency call handler that there is a potential child protection / safeguarding issue.
 3. Notify the Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO) or CB Safeguarding Manager (CBSM) as soon as medical attention is underway.
- **If NO:** Proceed to Step 2.

Step 2: Club Safeguarding Officer Availability

- **Question:** Are the Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO), CB Safeguarding Manager (CBSM), or RFU Safeguarding Team available?
 - **If YES:** Report the concern or disclosure directly to the CSO (or CBSM / RFU) at the earliest opportunity. The CSO will take the lead on the required statutory and RFU referral steps.
 - **If NO:** If neither the CSO nor CBSM is contactable, proceed directly to Step 3.

Step 3: Assessing the Nature of the Concern

- **Question:** Is the matter serious enough to potentially be considered a criminal offence, abuse, neglect, or significant harm?
 - **Branch A (Potentially Criminal / Serious Harm):**
 - *Does the incident involve the child's parent(s), guardian(s), or carer(s)?*
 - **NO:** Inform the parents/guardians at the earliest opportunity. Immediately report to **Somerset Children's Social Care** (0300 123 2224) and/or Police (**999** or **101**) AND email the **RFU Safeguarding Team** (safeguarding@rfu.com). Await their instructions before taking any further action.
 - **YES:** Do **NOT** inform the parents/carers. Report immediately directly to **Somerset Children's Social Care** and/or the Police AND the **RFU Safeguarding Team**.
 - **Branch B (Poor Practice / Non-Criminal Club Issue):**
 - *Does the allegation involve the child's parent(s), guardian(s), or carer(s)?*
 - **NO:** Inform the parents/guardians at the earliest opportunity. Ensure the CSO is informed. The CSO will inform the CBSM, and the CBSM will notify the RFU Safeguarding Team. The matter is managed as poor practice under RFU and club disciplinary/welfare procedures.
 - **YES:** Ensure the CSO is informed. The CSO informs the CBSM, who informs the RFU Safeguarding Team for appropriate guidance.

Step 4: Mandatory Written Documentation

- In **all cases and circumstances**, the person receiving or reporting the concern must complete a factual written statement on the official **RFU Initial Issue / Concern Reporting Form**.
- Submit the completed form to the RFU Safeguarding Team (safeguarding@rfu.com) and retain a secure copy for the CSO confidential file.

8.3 Allegations Against Club Volunteers or Coaches

- If an allegation is made against a coach, volunteer, or club official, the matter must be reported immediately to the CSO (or, if the allegation involves the CSO, directly to the Club Chairman / Somerset CBSM).
 - The CSO/Chairman will notify the **RFU Safeguarding Team** (safeguarding@rfu.com) and the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO / DO)** in Somerset.
 - In consultation with the RFU Safeguarding Team and LADO, the individual may be temporarily suspended from coaching/supervisory duties without prejudice pending investigation.
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8.4 Whistleblowing

Tor Rugby Club fully supports and protects whistleblowers. If any member has concerns that safeguarding issues are not being handled properly within the club, they are encouraged to contact the **RFU Safeguarding Team** directly (safeguarding@rfu.com) or the **NSPCC Helpline** (0800 800 5000).

9. KEY SAFEGUARDING CONTACTS DIRECTORY

Role / Organisation	Name / Contact Point	Phone / Email
Tor Rugby Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO)	Safeguarding Lead	safeguarding@torrugbyclub.co.uk
Tor Rugby Club General Enquiries	Club Administration	admin@torrugbyclub.co.uk
Somerset RFU Safeguarding Manager (CBSM)	Somerset County Safeguarding	Via somersetrugby.com
RFU Safeguarding Team (Twickenham)	National Safeguarding Desk	safeguarding@rfu.com
RFU DBS E-Applications	RFU DBS Support Team	dbseapp@rfu.com
RFU Referral Management Group (RMG)	RFU Case Management	rmg@rfu.com
Somerset Children's Social Care	Somerset Council First Contact	0300 123 2224 (Out of hours: 0300 123 2327)

Role / Organisation	Name / Contact Point	Phone / Email
Emergency Services	Police / Ambulance / Fire	999 (Emergency) / 101 (Non-Emergency)
NSPCC Child Protection Helpline	Free 24/7 Helpline for Adults	0800 800 5000 (help@nspcc.org.uk)
Childline	Free 24/7 Helpline for Children	0800 1111 (childline.org.uk)
NSPCC CPSU (Child Protection in Sport)	Sports Safeguarding Unit	0116 363 5588 (cpsu@nspcc.org.uk)

10. POLICY ADOPTION & ANNUAL REVIEW SCHEDULE

This Safeguarding Policy was reviewed, updated, and approved by the Tor Rugby Club Committee. It is scheduled for mandatory annual review before the start of each playing season.

- **Policy Document Version:** 2026/2027 Season Edition
- **Governing Regulations:** RFU Regulation 15 & RFU Regulation 21
- **Date of Adoption:** September 2026
- **Next Scheduled Review:** August 2027

Committee Sign-Off

Club President / Chairman:

Name: Dumiso Ncube

Signature: 

Date: 12/09/2026

Club Safeguarding Officer:

Name: Andrew Pearce

Signature: 

Date: 12/09/2026