



## CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

The Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) provides rugby activities to young people through participation in 199 affiliated clubs and 4 Branches and through national programmes and events, including representative panels, mini and youth coaching and competitions, squad camps and participation programmes in schools and related youth events.

The IRFU is committed to the enjoyment of rugby by young people. It values and encourages the participation of parents, coaches and volunteers in rugby for participants under 18-years of age. The policy of the IRFU regarding safeguarding children is to respect the dignity and rights of Age Grade Players.

The IRFU will strive throughout its organisation and spheres of influence to promote, create and maintain safe environments for Age Grade Players. It will endeavour to maintain the key values of Respect, Inclusivity, Integrity, Excellence and Fun. A detailed safeguarding policy can be found here, <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/safeguarding-policy/> and the Sports Councils' Code of Ethics/Safeguarding Guidance should be used where the IRFU has not published specific guidelines, in particular with regard to the principles to safeguard children from harm, <https://www.sportireland.ie/ethics/safeguarding-guidance-for-children-and-young-people-in-sport>

The IRFU carried out a risk assessment for any potential harm to a child while involved in rugby. These risks were categorised under the following headings Recruitment, Club and Coaching Practices, Reporting, Complaints, Facilities, Communication and General Risk of Harm. The assessment reviewed the areas of potential risk of harm, the likelihood of the risk occurring, and gives the required policy, guidance and document links required to manage these risks. The written risk assessment and the procedures for managing these risks is available at the end of this statement and on the IRFU website, <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/>

Our child safeguarding statement has been developed in line with requirements of the IRFU under the Children First Act 2015 and in Northern Ireland, the Club Framework for Safeguarding Standards. In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment, the following procedures are in place as part of the IRFU Safeguarding Policy and support our intention to safeguard children:

- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children, <http://www.irishrugby.ie/playingthegame/development/safeguarding/recruitment.php>
- Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm, <http://www.irishrugby.ie/playingthegame/development/safeguarding/training.php>
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection and welfare concerns to Tusla (Ireland) and Gateway (Northern Ireland) through the National Safeguarding Officer and appointed Mandated Person within IRFU: Stephen Gore, 086 6087943 / [stephen.gore@irfu.ie](mailto:stephen.gore@irfu.ie). The National Safeguarding Officer is the Relevant Person as per Children First Act. Other staff and volunteers within the organisation may hold the role and responsibility of a Mandated Person as per Schedule 2 of the Act but have not been appointed by the IRFU

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and/or its affiliated clubs or organisations. They are always expected to act as a Mandated Person and when making a report in their professional capacity that involves rugby should always inform the IRFU Mandated Person that such a report has been made by them.

- Procedure for the management of allegation of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service and can be found in the case management policy, <http://www.irishrugby.ie/playingthegame/development/safeguarding/concerns.php>
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person for the purposes of the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement
- Procedures to minimise risk of harm of a child have been put in place and are available in the IRFU Safeguarding Policy, <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/safeguarding-policy/>

All procedures listed are available on the IRFU website, <http://www.irishrugby.ie/safeguarding>. The IRFU expects those involved within club age-grade rugby to adopt and supervise the implementation of these safeguarding principles and standards. The IRFU recognises that implementation is an ongoing process. It is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and accompanying safeguarding policy and procedures to keep children involved in rugby safe from harm. This will be done through the implementation of the IRFU Safeguarding Guide and safeguarding audit.

The Safeguarding Policy is included in IRFU HR procedures and in relevant club documentation, it is an essential condition for funding for the Club Support Scheme. Relevant staff have received a copy of the policy and signed adherence through the Declaration of Intent. The Child Safeguarding Statement and related safeguarding policies are available to all parents/guardians and members of the public through the IRFU website and is available on request, [Irish Rugby | Safeguarding](#)

The IRFU will work with the Branch Spirit of Rugby on the Implementation of the policy and are available to assist the Club Welfare Officers and the related personnel and to deal with club queries. They can be contacted at:

- Connacht: Luke Murphy – [luke.murphy@connachtrugby.ie](mailto:luke.murphy@connachtrugby.ie)
- Leinster: Billy Phelan – [billy.phelan@leinsterrugby.ie](mailto:billy.phelan@leinsterrugby.ie)
- Munster: Emily O’Leary – [emilyoleary@munsterrugby.ie](mailto:emilyoleary@munsterrugby.ie)
- Ulster: Kerry Spence – [kerry.spence@ulsterrugby.com](mailto:kerry.spence@ulsterrugby.com)

Club Welfare Officers have completed relevant safeguarding training. They have been supplied with ID templates for display within club grounds for the purpose of raising concerns. Guidance and templates for carrying out a risk assessment and publishing the child safeguarding statement, a club action plan, an anti-bullying statement, club pavement signs and Spirit of Rugby ‘Let Them Play’ video clips have also been supplied for the purpose of implementing the IRFU safeguarding policy. They have also received training in vetting through the ‘IRFU registration system’. This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed in June 2025, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers. For queries please contact the Relevant Person, Stephen Gore, [stephen.gore@irfu.ie](mailto:stephen.gore@irfu.ie)

Signed:   
IRFU Union Committee

Signed: Peter O’Brien  
Safeguarding Chair on Spirit Committee

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# IRFU RISK ASSESSMENT

This risk assessment considers the potential for harm to come to children whilst they are in the care of the Irish Rugby Football Union and gives the required policy, guidance or process documents required to alleviate these risks. This risk assessment has been carried out prior to the publication of the IRFU's Child Safeguarding Statement (Section 11 (1b) Children First Act 2015). In this context and in accordance with the requirements of *Section 11 (1) of the Children First Act 201*, that states "as a provider of a relevant service we will undertake an assessment of any potential harm to a child while availing of the service"; the risk is of abuse and not general health and safety risk. This risk assessment is also in accordance with Sport Northern Ireland's Club Framework for Safeguarding Standards in Sport and as such can be used by the IRFU's constituent Provinces.

The risk assessment indicates the areas of potential risk of harm, the likelihood of the risk occurring, and gives the required policy, guidance or process documents required to alleviate these risks. The list of risks identified and procedures to manage these risks are listed in relevant categories overleaf and are based on the IRFU Club Safeguarding Guide.

## IRFU Responsibilities

- IRFU has **appointed a National Safeguarding Officer** to implement the IRFU Safeguarding Policy and to monitor the implementation of the associated Club Safeguarding Guide by Club Welfare Officers. The National SG Officer holds the role of Relevant Person for the organisation's Child Safeguarding Statement and also is the appointed Mandated Person
- This risk assessment has been completed with National Safeguarding Officer and other members of Spirit of Rugby Committee
- The Committee recorded this risk assessment in 2023 and published a Child Safeguarding Statement thereafter.
- All Age-Grade staff and volunteers (e.g. coaches, manager, team assistants) working regularly and continuously with Irish Squads (or where their role is a necessary part of working) with young people and/or vulnerable adults have been vetted and have signed the Declaration of Intent.
- The IRFU appointed a Mandated Person and listed their contact in the Child Safeguarding Statement.
- Templates were developed and distributed to clubs, along with links to relevant policies

This document was completed by National Safeguarding Officer on behalf of the Spirit Committee and approved by the union Committee in 2023. On completion of this the IRFU will complete and publish the Child Safeguarding Statement.

*Peter O'Brien*

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Peter O'Brien  
*Signed by Safeguarding Chair*

*Stephen Gore*

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Stephen Gore  
*Signed by National Safeguarding Officer*

*The Risk Assessment was undertaken on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2023 and will be reviewed in 2025 in line with updated Safeguarding Policies*

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The prevention of harm requires both awareness and practical implementation of the policies and procedures listed below put in place to manage risks identified by IRFU to keep children safe from harm as defined in legislation.

### Risk Assessment

Risk Identified: Club and Coaching Practices	Level	Procedures in Place	Monitoring of Risk
<p><b>Risk if relevant staff and volunteers are not aware of the safeguarding policy as it relates to club and coaching practices</b></p> <p><u>Considerations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk of harm if there is not a <b>consent form</b> for each player U-18 years of age, with parental permission, with relevant medical information and permission to participate, photographic permission and travel consent, (as in sign-up through Rugby Connect)</li> <li>• <b>Codes of Conduct</b> for age-grade players and parents published and/or on view</li> <li>• Risk of harm if staff and volunteers do not know policies in relation to <b>supervision, social media and photographs</b></li> <li>• Risk of harm if staff and volunteers are not aware of <b>travel and away trips</b> procedures</li> <li>• Risk of harm of abuse, including <b>online</b>, through <b>bullying</b> and inappropriate use of social media</li> </ul> <p>These policies have been made known to those working with Age-grade players</p>	High	<p><b>Safeguarding Policy</b> - <a href="https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/safeguarding-policy/">https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/safeguarding-policy/</a> and <a href="https://d19fc3vd0ojo3m.cloudfront.net/irfu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/16153839/Club-and-Volunteer-Responsibilities-Age-Grade-Rugby-v2.pdf">https://d19fc3vd0ojo3m.cloudfront.net/irfu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/16153839/Club-and-Volunteer-Responsibilities-Age-Grade-Rugby-v2.pdf</a></p> <p><b>Codes of Conduct</b> - <a href="https://d19fc3vd0ojo3m.cloudfront.net/irfu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/16153845/Code-of-Conduct-Parents.pdf">https://d19fc3vd0ojo3m.cloudfront.net/irfu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/16153845/Code-of-Conduct-Parents.pdf</a></p> <p><b>Bullying</b> <a href="https://d19fc3vd0ojo3m.cloudfront.net/irfu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/31120508/Anti-Bullying-Statement.pdf">https://d19fc3vd0ojo3m.cloudfront.net/irfu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/31120508/Anti-Bullying-Statement.pdf</a></p> <p><b>Images</b> factsheet in Club Guidance using best Practice Link <a href="#">Irish Rugby   Best Practice</a></p> <p><b>Overnight trip/tours</b> factsheet in club guidance using best practice link <a href="#">Irish Rugby   Best Practice</a></p>	<p>CSS and Codes on display at event / in clubhouse / on website / social media</p> <p>Information sessions to parents and squad members</p> <p>Anti-bullying statement is on display – use IRFU templates</p> <p>Info session for staff and volunteers (re: travel, non-collection, overnight/hosting)</p>
Risk Identified: Communication	Level	Procedures in Place	Monitoring of Risk
<p><b>Risk of harm if not communicating with staff, volunteers, parents and players</b></p> <p><u>Considerations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Safeguarding Statement and safeguarding policies communicated to members and staff so there is high awareness of safeguarding information</li> <li>• CWO ID template visible and communicated to all parents and volunteers so contact can be made if harm is identified</li> <li>• Safeguarding information made available on sign up so that parents and players know standards of behaviour</li> </ul>	High	<p>IRFU Policy and Child Safeguarding Statement visible on website and available to all parents on registration process - <a href="https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/safeguarding-policy/">https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/safeguarding-policy/</a></p> <p>ID template distributed to Spirit staff and made available to relevant camps, etc.</p>	CWO template on website and sent to volunteers

Risk Identified: Recruitment	Level	Procedures in Place	Monitoring
<p><b>Risk of recruiting inappropriate people to work with young people</b></p> <p><u>Considerations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a WO that is vetted and trained to SG2 standard</li> <li>• All relevant <b>Age-Grade staff and volunteers</b> successfully completed the necessary vetting requirements</li> <li>• All relevant Age-grade volunteers signed Declarations of Intent that clearly outlines their role</li> <li>• Age-grade section have put in place adequate <b>supervision</b> processes in accordance with IRFU Safeguarding Polices</li> <li>• Copies of reference for visiting / unknown coaches if applicable are sought</li> </ul>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p>	<p><b>Recruitment Policy,</b>  <a href="https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/recruitment/">https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/recruitment/</a></p> <p>Audit of Rugby Connect for outstanding <b>vets</b> weekly, emails relevant CWO or Spirit of Rugby Officer as necessary.</p> <p>Spirit of Rugby Officer to check with head coaches that adequate <b>supervision</b> is in place according to guidelines, factsheet under club guidance using best practice link <a href="#">Irish Rugby   Best Practice</a></p>	<p>Vetting and DoI renewals every 2-years through Rugby Connect CWO has access to confirm coach/volunteer has completed their vet</p>

Risk Identified: Complaints / Concerns	Level	Procedures in Place	Monitoring
<p><b>Risk of harm if complaints and reporting procedures are not in place</b></p> <p><u>Considerations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Risk of harm (physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect) of a child by a staff/volunteer/child</b> if reporting procedure not known</li> <li>• Name of Branch &amp; National Safeguarding Person is listed and visible within camp/squad facilities</li> <li>• The IRFU Mandated Person is listed on the CSS</li> <li>• Parents know how to raise a concern</li> <li>• Age-grade squad member can make their concerns known</li> <li>• Do all those involved with age-grade know how to raise a concern with Spirit Staff and/or to follow Children First / Our Duty to Care reporting process?</li> <li>• Staff know how to deal with complaints and raise a concern using case management form</li> </ul>	<p>High</p> <p>Med</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>Med</p> <p>Med</p>	<p><b>Reporting Procedures -</b>  <a href="https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/concerns/">https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/concerns/</a></p> <p><b>Parents information -</b>  <a href="https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/parents-guardians/">https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/parents-guardians/</a></p> <p><b>Case Management Reporting Form</b>  <a href="https://customervoice.microsoft.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=JRVazqodokKeM_5ulrGDeIERAZC3HTJNIFmj9hBUz8ZUMlIVSjQxNjEzUTQ4MFRRMVbIOVpXSTBGUj4u">https://customervoice.microsoft.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=JRVazqodokKeM_5ulrGDeIERAZC3HTJNIFmj9hBUz8ZUMlIVSjQxNjEzUTQ4MFRRMVbIOVpXSTBGUj4u</a></p> <p><b>Young People rights and reporting procedures -</b>  <a href="https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/young-people/">https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/young-people/</a></p>	<p>Necessary links to IRFU policy are displayed within CSS</p> <p>Spirit Officers deliver training regularly</p>

<p><b>Risk of harm when using facilities</b></p> <p><u>Considerations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If hiring facilities has the squad / club checked that appropriate safeguarding procedures have been put in place</li> <li>• Anti-bullying statement is made available to all for display and distribution to children and parents at camps, etc.</li> <li>• Appropriate medical procedures are in place at the facility</li> </ul>		<p><b>Facilities Information -</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/medical/">https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/medical/</a></p> <p>Event leads to request CSS and/or safeguarding policy, along with anti-bullying statement and CWO ID templates</p>	<p>Spirit Staff to support event staff as requested</p>
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<b>Risk Identified: General Risk of Harm</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Procedures in Place</b>	<b>Monitoring</b>
<p><b>Risk of untrained people working with young people</b></p> <p><u>Considerations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguarding personnel completed all Sport Ireland / SNI safeguarding training and other necessary staff and volunteers received appropriate safeguarding training as per IRFU training factsheet</li> <li>• <b>Risk of harm</b> (physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect) of a child by a staff/volunteer/child if coaches are not trained</li> <li>• Coaches completed safeguarding training presentation with Spirit Officer and/or SG1</li> <li>• Coaches working with Age-grade squads and players are appropriately trained for the level of rugby they are coaching</li> </ul>		<p><b>Training Policy,</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/training/">https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/training/</a></p> <p>Spirit Staff send out link to online Training</p> <p>CWO to link with Spirit of Rugby Officer for course delivery and confirmation of coach completion of rugby specific safeguarding training</p>	<p>Coaches training recorded in Gainline and rugby connect</p>