



# IRISH RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

## CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT - PART A

The Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) provides rugby activities to young people through participation in 203 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, <http://www.irishrugby.ie/safeguarding> and the Sports Councils' Code of Ethics should be used where the IRFU has not published specific guidelines, in particular with regard to the principles to safeguard children from harm, outlined in part B of this document, page 2.

Following a **risk assessment** for any potential harm to a child while involved in rugby we have identified areas of risk and the list of procedures to be put in place to manage these risks. These risks were categorised under the following headings Recruitment, Club and Coaching Practices, Reporting, Complaints, Facilities and Communication. **Part C (pages 3-6), indicates the areas of potential risk of harm**, the likelihood of the risk occurring, and gives the required policy, guidance or documents required to alleviate these risks. Our child safeguarding statement has been developed in line with requirements 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 Mandated Person within IRFU: Anne Marie Hughes (086 0485977 / [annemarie.hughes@irfu.ie](mailto:annemarie.hughes@irfu.ie)), National Safeguarding Officer holds position of Relevant Person as per Children First Act
- 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 to keep children involved in rugby safe from harm. This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed in March 2021, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers. For queries please contact Anne Marie Hughes, [annemarie.hughes@irfu.ie](mailto:annemarie.hughes@irfu.ie)

Signed: *Des Kavanagh*  
Des Kavanagh Chair of Spirit

Signed: *Peter O'Brien*  
Chair of Safeguarding working group

[WWW.IRISHRUGBY.IE/SAFEGUARDING](http://WWW.IRISHRUGBY.IE/SAFEGUARDING)





# PART B - PRINCIPLES TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN FROM HARM

IRFU is committed to safeguarding children and, by working under the guidance of our Safeguarding Policies our staff, both volunteers and employed, working with our young people, throughout the organisation, seek to create a safe environment for young people to grow and develop within sport. The following set of principles should be adhered to:

- **Importance of childhood** - The importance of childhood should be understood and valued by everyone involved in age-grade rugby.
- **Needs of the child** - All age-grade rugby experiences should be guided by what is best for children. This means that adults should have a basic understanding of the emotional, physical and personal needs of young people.
- **Integrity in relationships** - Adults interacting with young people in rugby are in a position of trust and influence. They should always ensure that young people are treated with integrity and respect, and the self-esteem of young people is enhanced.
- **Fair Play** - All age-grade rugby should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play. The principles of fair play should always be emphasised, and organisers should give clear guidelines regarding acceptable standards of behaviour.
- **Quality atmosphere & ethos** – Age-grade rugby should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere.
- **Competition** - Competition is an essential element of sport and should be encouraged in an age appropriate manner. A child centred ethos will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.
- **Equality** - All young people should be valued and treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of ability, age, gender, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion, as per the IRFU Charter

[https://www.sportireland.ie/Participation/Code\\_of\\_Ethics/Safeguarding%20Guidance/Safeguarding%20Guidance%20for%20Children%20and%20Young%20People%20in%20Sport.pdf](https://www.sportireland.ie/Participation/Code_of_Ethics/Safeguarding%20Guidance/Safeguarding%20Guidance%20for%20Children%20and%20Young%20People%20in%20Sport.pdf)



## PART C- 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 2011, 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 Action Plan.

### IRFU Responsibilities

- IRFU has **appointed a National Safeguarding Officer** to implement the IRFU Safeguarding Policy and to monitor the implementation of the associated Club Action Plan by Club Welfare Officers.
- This risk assessment has been completed with National Safeguarding Officer, the Safeguarding Representative and other members of Spirit of Rugby Committee
- The Committee recorded this risk assessment at the June 2019 Safeguarding meeting 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 has a Mandated Person and listed their contact in the Child Safeguarding Statement.
- Templates were developed and distributed to clubs

This document was completed by National Safeguarding Officer on behalf of the Spirit Committee and approved by the Safeguarding Group in June 2019. On completion of this the IRFU will now complete and publish the Child Safeguarding Statement signed by Chair of Spirit of Rugby Committee and Chair of Safeguarding Committee.

*Peter O'Brien*

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Peter O'Brien

Signed by Safeguarding Chair

*Anne Marie Hughes*

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Anne Marie Hughes

Signed by National Welfare Officer

*The Risk Assessment was undertaken in 19<sup>th</sup> June 2019 and will be reviewed in May 2021 in line with updated Safeguarding Policies*

[WWW.IRISHRUGBY.IE/SAFEGUARDING](http://WWW.IRISHRUGBY.IE/SAFEGUARDING)





Risk of harm to a Child Identified	Rate Risk – H / M / L	Procedure in place to manage risk identified	Ongoing Monitoring/Tasks
<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 Policy</li> <li>• Copies of reference for visiting / unknown coaches if applicable not sought</li> </ul>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p>	<p><b>Recruitment</b> Policy, <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>Safeguarding Administrator audits clubhouse for outstanding <b>vets</b> monthly, emails relevant CWO or Spirit of Rugby Officer as necessary.</p> <p>Spirit of Rugby Officer/Staff lead/HR manager to upload any missing Declaration of Intent for coaches / volunteers</p> <p>Spirit of Rugby Officer to Check with head coaches that adequate <b>supervision</b> is in place according to guidelines, see ‘Coach Practices’ - <a href="https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/">https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/</a></p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<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>• Risk of harm (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 are appropriately trained for the level of rugby they are coaching</li> </ul>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>Low</p> <p>Medium</p>	<p><b>Training Policy</b>, <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, <a href="https://childrenfirstuniversal.hseland.ie">https://childrenfirstuniversal.hseland.ie</a> and <a href="http://www.sportni.net/resources/">http://www.sportni.net/resources/</a></p> <p>SOs have trained relevant staff in risk of harm and reporting procedures</p> <p>CDMs have trained head coaches</p>	<p>AMH to email SO with information for Academies and summer camps annually</p>



Risk of harm to a Child Identified	Rate Risk H / M / L	Procedure in Place to manage risk identified	Ongoing Monitoring/Tasks
<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, (use template in IRFU Safeguarding policy)</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 online, through <b>bullying</b> and inappropriate use of social media</li> <li>• These policies been made known to those working with Age-grade players</li> </ul>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p>	<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></p> <p><b>Codes of Conduct</b> – see ‘Club Practice’ - <a href="https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/">https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/</a></p> <p><b>Bullying</b> – see ‘Club Practice’ <a href="https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/">https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/</a></p> <p><b>Social media guidance</b> – see ‘ Club Practice’ <a href="https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/">https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/</a></p> <p><b>Travel guidance</b> - including hosting and away trips – see ‘Club Practice’ - <a href="https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/">https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/</a></p>	<p>Display Codes of Conduct in clubhouse and/or 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><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</li> <li>• CWO ID template visible and communicated to all staff and volunteers working at IRFU events so contact can be made if harm is identified</li> </ul>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p>	<p>IRFU Policy and Child Safeguarding Statement visible - <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>	<p>CWO template displayed and sent to all staff and CWOs</p> <p>Letter sent to all Hon. Sec outlining requirements</p>



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<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>• Risk of harm (physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect) of a child by a staff/volunteer/child if reporting procedure not know</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</li> </ul>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</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>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>Spirit staff to ensure necessary links to IRFU policy are displayed</p> <p>Spirit Officers deliver training regularly</p>
<p><b>Use of 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 staff 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>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p>	<p><b>Facilities Information</b> - <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>



## PART D - IMPLEMENTATION

IRFU is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our activities. The IRFU created the Club Action Plan in 2016 and audits clubs annually in accordance with this plan, <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/>

The Safeguarding Policy is included in IRFU HR procedures and in relevant club documentation, it is an essential criteria 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, <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/>

Spirit of Rugby staff are appointed to assist clubs with the implementation of the policy and are available to train Club Welfare Officers and related personnel and deal with club queries. They can be contacted at:

- Connacht: Luke Murphy – [luke.murphy@connachtrugby.ie](mailto:luke.murphy@connachtrugby.ie)
- Leinster: Stephen Gore – [stephen.gore@leinsterrugby.ie](mailto:stephen.gore@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 Sport Ireland's SG1 & SG2 training and been supplied with ID templates for display within club grounds and/or club websites, templates for child safeguarding statement, risk assessments, club action plans, anti-bullying statement, club pavement signs and Spirit of Rugby silent behaviour video clips. They have also received training in vetting through the 'clubhouse system'.

This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed May 2021