



Shannon Rugby Football Club

Thomond Park, Limerick

www.shannonrfc.com

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Child Welfare/Safeguarding Procedures & Guidelines

1. Mission Statement:

Shannon RFC is fully committed to providing a healthy and safe environment for children. It recognises the importance for all management, members, coaches and parent /guardians to operate with respect and understanding for the safety and welfare of others in a manner that makes the club an enjoyable, healthy and fulfilling environment for our young players.

2. Aims of the Child Protection Policy

This Child Protection Policy, developed in accordance with the 'IRFU Child Welfare Policy' and the 'Irish Sports Council Code of Ethics and Good Practice in Children's Sport', aims to Create a safe environment for all young people at Shannon R.F.C. and participants in all activities organized by the club.

Develop an awareness and responsibility in the area of child protection amongst all personnel and the management of Shannon R.F.C.

Put in place procedures for good practice to protect all children engaged in club activities.

Ensure that all personnel are aware of Children First Guidelines in relation to reporting concerns and/or disclosures of child abuse.

3. Awareness

(a) Declaration of Intent

All coaches, managers and assistants of our age grade squads sign the form contained in the IRFU Child Welfare Policy.

(b) At the start of each season parents are given a copy of this Child Protection Policy.

(c) This policy and all relevant documentation are displayed on the Shannon RFC website.

4. Child Protection Procedures

4.1 Child Welfare Officer:

Shannon RFC has appointed a Child Welfare Officer who is the initial point of contact for all issues identified in these procedures. She is committed to maintaining best practice in the area of child protection within Shannon RFC and operates in a fully confidential manner. The role of the Child Welfare Officer is as follows:

1. Act at all times in the best interests of Age Grade Players/ Child.
2. Be intimately familiar with the provisions of the Code and Policy and the Guidelines and with such further information and requirements as may be provided or put in place by the IRFU.
3. Communicate with the appropriate Branch Child Welfare Officer on any matter on which the Club Child Welfare Officer considers it necessary to do so, or any matter in relation to Age Grade Players on which the advice or directions of the Union required.
4. Receive advice, information and directions from the Branch Child Welfare Officer/ IRFU concerning Age Grade Players and act accordingly.
4. Inform their Clubs of requirements made by the IRFU concerning Age Grade Players.
5. Ensure that they are in a position to respond accurately and promptly to queries from the IRFU as to the welfare of Age Grade Players in their club generally or in relation to any specific incident which may occur.
6. Be the contact person in the club for the Statutory Authorities regarding the welfare of age grade players. It should be noted that queries relating to specific rugby issues such as playing time (See Section 6 below) should be directed in the first instance to the coach and thereafter to the Chairman of UnderAge.

4.2 Garda Vetting:

All coaches involved in age-grade rugby undergo Garda vetting which is administered by the Child Welfare Officer and managed by the Branch.

4.3 Physical Contact:

Rugby is a physical sport and does involve occasional physical contact between coaches and players, this contact should always happen in the context of training and will always happen in an open environment. It is based on the needs of the player, is

acceptable to the player, is open and not secretive and is appropriate to the developmental needs of the player.

4.4 Dropping off and Collecting:

Parents are responsible for the safe delivery and collection of their children. Children should never be left unattended within the club grounds, associated facilities, bus drop off or collection points. Responsibility for visiting teams rests with the coaches of that team.

4.5 Photography:

Photography disclaimer to be signed by all parents on membership forms. Only authorised photographers are permitted to photograph at club activities, permission must be sought of an appropriate source before any photography may take place, unauthorized photography is strictly prohibited.

4.6 Away matches/trips including overnights:

Shannon RFC will endeavour to keep the following practices in relation to away matches :

- to use safe methods of transport
- to have written parental consent and contact details
- to have all necessary information about the children under our care, which may be relevant to staying way overnight, i.e.; allergies, medical problems, special requirements etc
- to organize appropriate and well supervised sleeping arrangements

4.7 Responding to disclosures of alleged or suspected child abuse

All Club personnel will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in ‘Children First Guidelines’ with all allegations of suspected abuse reported in the first instance to the Child Welfare Officer. A strict adherence to maintaining confidentiality will be maintained, confirmation regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse should only be given on a “need to know basis”. If a child discloses to a manager/coach that he/she is being harmed by a parent/carer or any other person, the person who receives that information should listen carefully and supportively. This applies equally where a child implies that they are at risk of being harmed. It also applies equally if a parent/carer or any other person discloses that

he/she has harmed or is a risk of harming a child. The child should not be interviewed formally; the manager/coach should only obtain relevant necessary facts if and when clarification is needed. Confidentiality must never be promised to a person making a disclosure and the requirement to report to the HSE must be explained in a supportive manner. The discussion should be recorded on an incident recording form. The manager/coach should then inform the Child Welfare Officer who is responsible for reporting the matter to the Child Protection Services in the HSE or in the event of an emergency and the unavailability of the HSE, to An Garda Siochana.

5. Codes of Conduct

5.1 Code for Players

- Play for enjoyment and become part of the rugby family.
- Respect the “Game of Rugby” and play within the laws of the Game.
- Accept the referee’s decision and let your captain or coach ask any relevant questions.
- Play with control. Do not lose your temper.
- Always do your best and be committed to the game, your team and your club.
- Be a “good sport”. Applaud all good play whether by your team or the opposition.
- Respect your opponent. Treat all players as you would like to be treated. Do not “bully” or take advantage of any player.
- Rugby is a team sport and make sure you co-operate with your coach; team mates and members of your club.
- Remember that the goals of the game are to have fun, improve your skills and feel good.
- At the end of the match thank your opponents and the referee for the match.
- Always remember that you owe a duty of care to your opponents. Tackle hard but fairly, do not intend to hurt your opponent.
- Winning and losing is part of sport: Win with humility – lose with dignity.
- As part of the team it is important that you attend training regularly and listen to your coach and help your team.
- As a team sport it is important to understand that all members are important to the team!
- Remember you are representing your team, club, family and the Game of Rugby.

5.2 Code for Spectators

- Remember that although young people play organised rugby they are not “mini internationals”.
- Be on your best behaviour and lead by example. Do not use profane language or harass referees, players or coaches.
- Applaud good play by the visiting team as well as your own.
- Show respect for your team’s opponents. Without them there would not be a match.
- Condemn the use of violence in all forms at every opportunity.
- Verbal abuse of players or referees cannot be accepted in any shape or form.
- Players or referees are not fair targets for ignorant behaviour.
- Encourage young players to play by the Laws of the Game.
- Spectators can contribute to the enjoyment of the event and all involved.
- Be proud of your club and the Game of Rugby.

5.3 Code for Parents

- Remember, young people play rugby for their enjoyment, not only yours.
- Encourage your child always to play by the Laws of the Game.
- Teach young children that honest endeavour is as important as winning, so that the result of each game is accepted without disappointment.
- Help young people to work towards skill improvement and good sportsmanship.
- Set a good example by applauding good play on both sides.
- Never ridicule, humiliate or shout at young players for making a mistake or losing a match.
- Do not place emphasis on winning at all costs.
- Do not force an unwilling child to participate in the playing of rugby. If the child is to play, he/she will do so in good time through your encouragement.
- Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from rugby.
- As a spectator do not use profane language or harass referees, coaches or players.
- Do not publicly question the referees’ judgment and never their honesty.
- Recognise the value and importance of volunteer referees and coaches.
- Identify and acknowledge the good qualities of the Game of Rugby and uphold these values.

- Remember your, and your child's, contribution to the Game of Rugby is very important to the IRFU and be proud of your contribution. Understand the value of team sport and the importance thereof.

5.4 Code for Coaches

- Remember that as a coach of an "age grade team" you have a duty of care that is more onerous than that of a coach to an adult team.
- Lead by example - young people need a coach whom they respect.
- Be generous with your praise when it is deserved.
- Never ridicule or shout at players for making mistakes or losing a match.
- Be reasonable in your demands on the players' time, energy and enthusiasm.
- Ensure that all players participate in matches. The "average" players require and deserve equal time. Remember that young players play for fun and enjoyment and that skill learning and playing for fun have priority over highly structured competition. Winning is not the only objective.
- Develop player and team respect for the ability of opponents, as well as for the judgement of referees and opposing coaches.
- Insist on fair play and disciplined play. Do not tolerate foul play, fighting or foul language. Be prepared to take off an offending player.
- Encourage young players to develop basic skills and sportsmanship.
- Set realistic goals for the team and individual players and do not push young players into adult-like competitions.
- Create a safe and enjoyable environment in which to train and play.
- Do not over burden younger players with too much information.
- Make a personal commitment to keep yourself informed on sound coaching principles and methods, and on the principles of growth and development of young people.
- Be aware of the effect you have on growing children.
- Never criticise the referee and touch judges during or after a match in front of players or spectators. Always thank the match officials and if they have made decisions which require clarification, discuss the problems after everyone has changed.

- Seek and follow the advice of a doctor in determining when an injured player is ready to play again. Adhere rigidly to the Concussion Protocol and other similar guidance.
- Ensure that proper equipment and facilities are available at all times.
- Be responsible and ensure you uphold the ethos of the game and the IRFU.
- Attend coaching courses.
- Support the Code of Ethics and all policies regarding Children in Sport.
- Ensure you and your players are proud of your team, club and efforts during the season.

6. Playing Time Guidelines for Parents & Coaches

We understand that there will be players of different abilities at each age grade within the club and these guidelines are provided to ensure all players receive a fair share of game time. Players learn from many sources-coaches, parents, mentors and other players. Playing a fringe player with a more established and higher standard player may serve to develop the fringe player even more.

- Under 18's and 16's- Coaches should try to play fringe players whenever possible. However for League & Cup games this requirement should be balanced against achieving required results and advancement.
- Under 15's - A balance between playing the strongest possible team to achieve desired results and the playing fringe players should be met. (League fixtures should be used to play (start) the fringe players and weaker opposition games in Cup should be targeted for inclusion of fringe players.
- Under 14's / 13's - All players should rotate into starting games / play majority of fixtures.
- The same players should not be on the substitutes' bench each week. (Some allowance can be made for games against very strong opposition but this should be the exception rather than the norm). Training attendance should be taken into account when selecting teams - players who do not regularly attend training should not be selected ahead of those who do attend on a regular basis.
- Mini's - All players should play every game (numbers permitting) and the same players should not be used as substitutes every week. Equal game time for all those who attend training on a regular basis is a requirement at this level.

Remember - these games are noncompetitive and the focus is on skills development & player enjoyment.

7. Complaints Procedures

The following section refers to procedures to be followed if a member wishes to make a complaint against another member of Shannon RFC for alleged breaches of conduct under this Child Welfare Policy.

Shannon RFC encourages all club members to make every reasonable effort to address their concerns and resolve their issues with another club member informally before filing a formal, written grievance. It is in the best interest of all involved with the club if differences can be resolved without the need for a formal grievance. If this is not achieved then the following procedure should be followed:

1. The complaint should be submitted in writing to the Child Welfare Officer within 2 weeks of the event in question.
2. If the complaint involves an alleged abuse of a child, the complaint should be made immediately and the Child Welfare Officer informed as a matter of urgency.
3. The complaint will be brought to the attention of the club chairperson. The chairperson or a designee may speak to the club member raising the grievance and attempt to resolve the issue.
4. If this is successful the secretary will notify the club committee at the next club meeting of the fact that a grievance had been dealt with, and may provide broad outlines but always maintaining the anonymity of all parties involved.
5. If the issue is not yet resolved, the chairperson will convene a grievance committee. Copies of the written grievance will be made available to all members whom the grievance addresses, and to the members of the grievance committee.
6. The grievance committee will meet to determine whether a hearing is necessary. If the complaint involves a criminal offence and or an alleged incident of abuse against a child the disciplinary committee will be disbanded and the statutory authorities informed.
7. If deemed necessary and appropriate, a grievance hearing date will be scheduled and all parties are required to appear in front of the grievance committee.
8. Prior to the hearing, the members to whom the grievance addresses will be afforded an opportunity to respond in writing, and this will be provided to all members of the grievance committee as well as to the member who filled the grievance.

9. The time interval for the written responses will be established at the time that the hearing date is scheduled.
10. If the grievance committee finds the accused member guilty of a violation, they may recommend a penalty for the misconduct to the club chairperson. Disciplinary action will be determined on a case by case basis.
11. Accordingly Shannon RFC has the option of using the following progressive discipline process:
 - Verbal warning
 - Written reprimand
 - Suspension and or termination of membership

Because some misconduct warrants skipping steps in the process, Shannon RFC reserves the right to immediately terminate a membership or skip any steps in the progressive discipline process. The decision of the grievance committee may be appealed to the Club President, who reserves the right to convene an Appeals Committee.

8. Anti-Bullying Policy and Procedures

8.1 Introduction

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at Shannon RFC. If bullying does occur, all club members or parents should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the Child Welfare Officer or any committee member.

8.2 Overview of Bullying

Definition: “Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others”. Bullying can take many forms, but its aim is always to make a person feel upset, intimidated or afraid:

Most common forms of bullying are:

Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence

Verbal: name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing.

Emotional: making threats, spreading rumours, excluding, ignoring etc.

Non-verbal: making suggestive, provocative or intimidating gestures.

E-bullying: sending threatening or upsetting messages or images.

Personal Property: threats against or damage to a person’s property

Why is it important to respond to bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Individuals who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving. This Club has a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Signs and indicators of bullying

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- says he or she is being bullied
 - is unwilling to go to club sessions
 - becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
 - feels ill before training sessions
 - comes home with clothes torn or training kit damaged
 - has possessions go “missing” • asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay the bully)
 - has unexplained cuts or bruises
 - is frightened to say what’s wrong
 - gives improbable excuses for any of the above
 - *In more extreme cases*
 - starts stammering
 - cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
 - becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
 - is bullying other children or siblings
 - stops eating
 - attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- These signs and behaviours may indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

8.3 Objectives of this policy

All members, officials, coaching staff, players and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is. All members, officials, coaching staff, players and

parents should know what the Club policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported. All can be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

Bullying will not be tolerated.

8.4 Procedures Report bullying incidents to the Child Welfare Officer or a member of the clubs committee.

In cases of serious bullying, the incidents will be referred to the Branch and the IRFU. Parents should be informed and will be asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem. If necessary and appropriate, the HSE and/or An Garda Síochána will be consulted. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped quickly. An attempt will be made to help the bully (bullies) change their behaviour. If mediation fails and the bullying is seen to continue the club will initiate disciplinary action under the Club constitution.

In the case of adults reported to be bullying anyone within the club who is under 19 (Youth & Minis):

The Clubs' Child Welfare Officer should always be informed and will advise on action to be taken where appropriate.

It is anticipated that in all cases where the allegation is made regarding a coach, team manager or club official the Branch Child Welfare and IRFU National Child Welfare Officers will be informed.

More serious cases may be referred to H.S.E. and/or An Garda Síochána.

Recommended club action (particularly age grade incidents).

If the club decides that it is appropriate to deal with the situation the following procedure will be followed:

1. Reconciliation by getting the parties together.

It may be that an apology solves the problem. If this fails/not appropriate, a panel of 3 members, appointed by the Executive, should meet with the parent and child alleging bullying to get details of the allegation.

2. Minutes should be taken for clarity, which should be agreed by all as a true account. The same panel should meet with the alleged bully and parent/s and put the incident raised to them to answer and give their view of the allegation.

Minutes should again be taken and agreed. If bullying has, in their view, taken place the individual should be warned and put on notice of further action i.e. temporary or permanent suspension if the bullying continues.

3. Consideration should be given as to whether a reconciliation meeting between parties is appropriate at this time. In some cases the parent of the bully or bullied player can be asked to attend training sessions, if they are able to do so, and if appropriate.
4. The club committee should monitor the situation for a given period to ensure the bullying is not being repeated.
5. All coaches involved with both individuals should be made aware of the concerns and outcome of the process i.e. the warning.

9. References

IRFU Child Welfare Policy:

<http://www.irishrugby.ie/childwelfare>

Irish Sports Council Code of Ethics and Good Practice in Children's Sport:

<https://www.sportireland.ie/ethics>

Children's First Guidelines:

<https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-guidance-and-legislation/>

10. Contact Details

Child Welfare Officer: Wyn Griffiths Tel: 083 8000630

Chairman of Underage: Declan O'Halloran Tel: 086 0454098

NMB Youth Delegate: Ian Coll Tel: 087 7464887

Mini's Co-ordinator: Noel Moore Tel: 087 7977120

Club Hon Secretary: Mr Barry McConkey Tel: 087 2793007