



Safeguarding Bulletin

1st August 2026

Welcome Back!

We hope you've had an enjoyable summer and are looking forward to the season ahead. With pre-season preparations underway, we're excited about what's shaping up to be another fantastic year for rugby.

Before we get started, we'd like to say a huge thank you for your engagement with the Regulation 21 and Safeguarding Policy review last season. The feedback we received was thoughtful, constructive and incredibly valuable. We already know that rugby benefits from a dedicated network of safeguarding volunteers across the game, and your willingness to share your views has helped shape the future of safeguarding in rugby.

There have been a number of developments over recent months. We've welcomed new colleagues into our Safeguarding Case Management Team and, most significantly, introduced seven new regional Safeguarding Development Officers. These roles have been created to provide greater local support and help us strengthen safeguarding across the game.

As always, thank you for everything you do to make rugby a safe, positive and enjoyable environment for children and young people. Your commitment is greatly appreciated. If there's anything we can do to support you during the season, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Best wishes,

The RFU Safeguarding Team

Regulation 21: What's Changed?

We hope that the changes bring safeguarding, DBS compliance and risk management into a single, clearer framework. While many of the principles will feel familiar, there are some important changes and clarifications for clubs, volunteers and the wider game.

Key highlights include:

- ◆ Clearer expectations around reporting concerns. Failing to pass safeguarding concerns to the RFU Safeguarding Team, or discouraging someone from reporting a concern, is now specifically identified as a breach of the regulations.
- ◆ DBS requirements tightened up Anyone aged 16+ working in regulated or other eligible roles must:
 - Apply for a DBS check within four weeks of starting.
 - Provide any information requested by the RFU.

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- Maintain their DBS status through the Update Service or renew every three years.
- Those awaiting DBS clearance can only work under close and proactive supervision, and that exemption ends immediately if safeguarding information is returned on a DBS certificate.
- ♦ New Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG) The former Referral Management Group has been replaced by the SCMG, which will make decisions about DBS clearance, interim bars and indefinite bars where there are safeguarding concerns.

Repeated safeguarding failures could lead to:

- Formal warnings and mandatory education.
- Suspended league point deductions.
- Actual league point deductions for persistent non-compliance.

What does this mean for clubs?

The overall message is simple: safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. The updated Regulation 21 places greater emphasis on early reporting, safer recruitment, DBS compliance, accountability and creating environments where children and adults at risk can participate safely and enjoy rugby.

Please familiarize yourself with the new Regulations. They can be found [here](#).

Safeguarding Policy and Handbook

Alongside the updated Regulation 21, the RFU has introduced a new Safeguarding Children Policy, reinforcing the message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Built around rugby's Core Values the policy sets out a clear commitment to creating safe, positive and inclusive environments for all children involved in the game. It highlights the importance of listening to children, reporting concerns, promoting positive behaviour, and ensuring that everyone, from players and parents to coaches, officials and volunteers, understands their role in keeping children safe.

The policy, Safeguarding Handbook and Regulation 21 together form the RFU's safeguarding framework, providing the standards, guidance and procedures that underpin safeguarding across rugby in England.

The Policy can be found [here](#). A model club policy is also available [here](#) should you wish to use it.

We are experiencing a few technical difficulties with the website and Safeguarding Handbook. Both should be live in the next five days. Please be aware that we will regularly update the Handbook with additional information; there will be a clear version control visible.

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England Rugby Learning

If you haven't already, please register with England Rugby Learning.

England Rugby has introduced a major upgrade to how we support coaches, match officials and volunteers to complete essential training, access resources, and continually refresh their knowledge and skills. These changes take into consideration feedback from the game and our Community Rugby Digital User Groups. The new offer is designed to make learning simpler, more personalised, and easier to complete, especially on mobile devices.

Further information can be found [Here](#)

Safeguarding Development Officers

We are delighted to have recruited seven new Safeguarding Development Officers, bringing dedicated, proactive support closer to CBs, clubs, referee societies and other member organisations across the game. Through development-led practice reviews, practical guidance, training and action planning, these roles will help strengthen safeguarding practice at local level. Aligned to the new regional structure, this marks an exciting step forward in how we support the community game, with a clear focus on prevention, quality assurance, learning and continuous improvement.

The first four officers have now joined the RFU and are being onboarded, with the remaining three starting at the end of August. Having these new colleagues in post for the start of the season is a fantastic opportunity to build momentum, strengthen connections and work even more closely with safeguarding stakeholder volunteers. Their initial focus will be on engagement and networking, helping to establish strong relationships that will support clubs and communities throughout the season.

As with any new role, these colleagues will need time to embed into the organisation and the game. We will share more with the game in the coming weeks and months about the role, their specific responsibilities and how they will be deployed to support volunteers and the wider rugby community.

Annual Club Safeguarding Audit

It's that time of year again and the Safeguarding Audit is now live. Just a reminder that it sits in the questionnaire tab of GMS.

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It is designed to assist you in identifying areas for development so please answer questions honestly. There is not a pass or fail; your answers will help the RFU and your Constituent Body Safeguarding Manager to identify clubs that may need some further support in relation to safeguarding. This process also acts as a handy reminder of the key provisions to be in place for the start of the season, so please complete as early as possible.

The deadline for completion is **Sunday 25th October 2026**.

Should you have any questions, please have a look at the [Help Article](#), you can also use this to raise a Scrum Request, should you find that the audit has in error not been opened to your club.

Crime and Policing Act 2026

Safeguarding officers should be aware of changes introduced through the Crime and Policing Act 2026, including the removal of the "supervision exemption" from the definition of regulated activity from 1 September 2026. This means that individuals undertaking certain roles with children may now be eligible for enhanced DBS checks with children's barred list information, even where they are supervised.

In rugby, this change has limited practical impact as the game has traditionally not relied on the supervision exemption as a safeguarding control. Given the nature of our activities and the size of rugby pitches, clubs have always been expected to ensure that those working with children are recruited and vetted appropriately.

Looking ahead, the Act also introduces a mandatory reporting duty in relation to child sexual abuse, which is due to come into effect in 2027. While further guidance will be provided in advance of implementation, RFU safeguarding practice remains unchanged. All safeguarding concerns must continue to be reported in line with existing RFU safeguarding policy and procedures. Early reporting enables concerns to be assessed appropriately and helps ensure children are safeguarded effectively.

The key message is simple: while the legislation is changing, there is no change to what we expect in rugby. If in doubt, report your concern to the RFU Safeguarding Team and follow existing reporting procedures.

Use of Reporting Form and other reminders...

Safeguarding concerns should be submitted using the [designated webform](#), which feeds directly into the RFU's case management system. This ensures that concerns are received promptly by the Safeguarding Team, recorded securely and consistently, and allocated for assessment without unnecessary delay. Using the webform also helps ensure that key information is captured at the point

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of referral, reduces the risk of information being missed or misdirected, and creates a clear audit trail to support proportionate, transparent and risk-led decision making.

Although not directly safeguarding focussed, there have been several changes within Age Grade Rugby this season, including a review of Regulation 15. Please [have a look](#) and encourage your Age Grade colleagues to do likewise.

The Child Protection in Sport Unit is now known as [NSPCC Sport](#). They continue to offer a wide range of Tools, Advice and Training and we would encourage you to spend a little time having a look at what they offer.

As ever, if we can assist in anyway, please do email safeguarding@rfu.com

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