



FAIRFORD RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

Safeguarding and Welfare Policy Pack

Children, young people and adults at risk | 2026-2027

Safeguarding contact

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This Policy reflects the RFU Safeguarding Bulletin issued in August 2026 and supplements, rather than replaces, RFU Regulation 21, the RFU Safeguarding Children Policy and the current RFU Safeguarding Handbook.

Document owner	FRFC Committee
Operational lead	Club Safeguarding Officer
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Version	Updated August 2026
Review	August 2027, or sooner following a change in law, RFU guidance or club arrangements

Club locations

- Seniors and Vixens: Coln House School Playing Field, Horcott Road, Fairford, GL7 4DD.
- Juniors and Minis: The Park, Leafield Road, Fairford, GL7 4JQ. No access via Park Street; no dogs.
- Clubhouse: Marlborough Arms, Cirencester Road, Fairford, GL7 4BS.

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1. Club safeguarding policy and reporting

Purpose

To establish FRFC's commitment, responsibilities and immediate reporting arrangements for safeguarding children and adults at risk.

Fairford RFC is committed to providing a safe, positive and inclusive rugby environment. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All members, players, parents, carers, coaches, volunteers, officials, visitors and contractors must act when they see, hear or suspect that someone may be at risk.

Scope

- All FRFC activities, teams, facilities, events, trips and tours.
- Conduct connected with FRFC in person, online or away from club premises.
- Children under 18 and adults who may have care and support needs and be unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect.

Core principles

- The welfare of the child or adult at risk comes first.
- Listen, reassure and take concerns seriously.
- Do not investigate, confront an alleged person of concern or promise secrecy.
- Share information only with those who need it to protect someone or manage the concern.
- Treat everyone fairly and without discrimination; make reasonable adjustments where appropriate.
- Follow RFU Regulation 21, the RFU Safeguarding Children Policy, the current RFU Safeguarding Handbook and applicable statutory procedures.

What to do

1. If anyone is in immediate danger or urgently needs medical help, call 999.
2. Listen calmly. Do not ask leading questions. Explain that you may need to share information to keep people safe.
3. Write down the facts, time, place and exact words used as soon as possible.
4. Report promptly to Sandra Lewis at safeguarding@fairfordrfc.co.uk and use the FRFC Safeguarding Concern and Referral Form.
5. Submit every safeguarding concern through the designated RFU online Safeguarding Referral Form, which feeds directly into the RFU case-management system. A person may report directly to the RFU and does not have to report locally first.
6. Contact police or Gloucestershire children's/adult social care where required. Do not delay because a club officer is unavailable.

Important reporting duty

Failing to pass a safeguarding concern to the RFU Safeguarding Team, or discouraging anyone from reporting a concern, is specifically identified as a breach of RFU Regulation 21. The Club Safeguarding Officer coordinates the club response but does not determine whether abuse has occurred.

Roles

- The Committee approves policy, resources safeguarding and monitors compliance.
- The Chair provides senior oversight and ensures concerns about club officers are routed appropriately.
- The Club Safeguarding Officer receives concerns, keeps secure records, obtains advice, makes or supports referrals and maintains the safeguarding plan.

- Coaches and team managers provide safe supervision, follow codes of conduct and escalate concerns immediately.
- All age-grade activity must comply with RFU Regulation 15 and the current Age Grade Playing Calendar. Adults must not participate in any aspect of contact training with age-grade players, including holding contact shields or tackle bags, demonstrating tackles, rucks, scrums, lineouts or mauls, or joining semi-contact or opposed activity.
- Every member and volunteer must report concerns and cooperate with safeguarding arrangements.

2. Safeguarding adults at risk

Purpose

To ensure adults with care and support needs can participate in rugby safely, with dignity, choice and appropriate protection.

An adult at risk is an adult who has needs for care and support, is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect and, because of those needs, may be unable to protect themselves. Vulnerability can be permanent, temporary or situational and must never be assumed solely from age or disability.

Possible concerns

- Physical, sexual, psychological or emotional abuse.
- Financial or material abuse, exploitation, coercion or controlling behaviour.
- Neglect, acts of omission, self-neglect or unsafe care.
- Discriminatory, organisational or domestic abuse.
- Online abuse, grooming, harassment or misuse of images.

Response

- Speak to the adult privately where safe and communicate in a way they understand.
- Presume capacity unless there is reason to believe otherwise. Seek the adult's views and wishes, while recognising information may still need to be shared to prevent serious harm or protect others.
- Avoid making promises about outcomes or confidentiality.
- Record and report using the same FRFC and RFU route as any safeguarding concern.
- In an emergency call 999; otherwise contact Gloucestershire Adult Social Care where statutory advice or referral is required.

3. Safer recruitment and DBS

Purpose

To ensure people in roles involving children or adults at risk are suitable, appropriately checked, inducted, trained and supervised.

FRFC will define each role and whether it is eligible for an enhanced DBS check and barred-list check. A DBS check is only one part of safer recruitment and must not be used as the sole assessment of suitability.

Required process

1. Use a clear role description and application or expression-of-interest process.
2. Check identity, rugby history, qualifications and any unexplained gaps relevant to the role.
3. Take up suitable references before unsupervised work begins.
4. Anyone aged 16 or over starting regulated activity or another DBS-eligible rugby role must apply for the appropriate RFU DBS check within four weeks of starting.
5. The applicant must provide information requested by the RFU and maintain DBS status through the DBS Update Service or renew the check every three years.
6. A person awaiting clearance may work only under close and proactive supervision. This temporary arrangement ends immediately if safeguarding information is returned on their DBS certificate.
7. From 1 September 2026, the Crime and Policing Act 2026 removes the supervision exemption from the definition of regulated activity. FRFC will assess supervised roles for enhanced DBS and children's barred-list eligibility under current RFU guidance.
8. Do not accept an unrelated organisation's DBS check without following the RFU process.
9. Confirm required safeguarding, concussion, first-aid and role-specific learning and provide induction covering reporting, boundaries, online contact, changing rooms, transport and tours.
10. Record appointment approval, checks, training, supervision and renewal dates securely.

DBS decision-making

The RFU Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG), which replaces the former Referral Management Group, makes relevant decisions about DBS clearance and interim or indefinite bars where safeguarding information is identified.

4. Anti-bullying, harassment and harmful behaviour

Purpose

To prevent and respond consistently to bullying, harassment, discrimination, sexualised behaviour, hazing and retaliation.

Bullying may be repeated or a serious one-off incident and can be physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, discriminatory, relational or online. Banter is not a defence where conduct causes harm, humiliation, exclusion or fear.

FRFC will

- Model the RFU core values of teamwork, respect, enjoyment, discipline and sportsmanship.
- Act promptly on reports, preserve relevant evidence and consider immediate safety and support.
- Listen to the person affected and make reasonable adjustments to help them participate safely.
- Separate safeguarding, disciplinary and performance issues and use the correct route for each.
- Avoid forcing mediation or apology where unsafe or inappropriate.
- Take proportionate action, monitor for retaliation and review team or club culture.

Reporting

Any bullying involving a child or adult at risk, sexualised conduct, threats, grooming, discrimination linked to safety, or risk of significant harm must be reported as a safeguarding concern. Other conduct may be addressed through the Code of Conduct, complaints or disciplinary process.

5. Photography, filming and social media

Purpose

To use images lawfully, safely and respectfully without creating avoidable safeguarding, privacy or reputational risks.

- Obtain and record appropriate consent for planned photography or filming and respect a person's decision not to be photographed.
- Use club-approved devices and accounts where practicable; store and share images securely.
- Do not publish a child's full name with an image or reveal sensitive details such as address, school, medical information or travel routine.
- Images must show appropriate clothing and activity. Do not create or retain images in changing rooms, showers or treatment areas.
- Photography must not distract from supervision or interfere with play.
- Opposition and event requirements must be respected.
- Report suspicious, sexualised, covert or persistent photography immediately. Do not copy or circulate concerning material unnecessarily.
- Remove an image from club channels promptly where consent is withdrawn or a safeguarding concern arises, subject to lawful record-preservation needs.

Media and livestreaming

Any official livestream, media visit or promotional shoot must have prior club approval, a clear purpose, appropriate consent, controlled access and a named responsible adult. Location data and live travel information must be considered before posting.

6. Online communication, messaging and WhatsApp

Purpose

To keep rugby communications transparent, necessary, age-appropriate and open to oversight.

- Use official team or club channels for rugby business. Keep messages factual, respectful and capable of being reviewed.
- For children, communicate through parents/carers wherever practicable. Where an age-grade group includes 16- or 17-year-olds, include parents/carers and at least two authorised adults as administrators.
- Do not use secret, disappearing or private one-to-one messaging with a child. Move an accidental direct contact into the approved group and inform another responsible adult.
- Do not request or share sexualised, intimate or unnecessary personal content.
- Avoid late-night contact except for genuine urgent operational information.
- Do not use group chats for safeguarding disclosures, disputes or confidential medical details. Move the issue to the correct secure route.
- Membership lists, phone numbers, screenshots and chat exports are personal information and must not be circulated without a proper reason.
- Remove former members and volunteers promptly and review administrator access each season.

If a child contacts an adult privately

Do not ignore a message that indicates risk. Respond only enough to establish immediate safety, explain that the information must be shared, preserve the message and report it promptly to the Club Safeguarding Officer or emergency services.

7. Changing rooms, showering and personal devices

Purpose

To protect privacy and dignity and reduce opportunities for abuse, harmful behaviour or misunderstanding.

- Adults must not change or shower at the same time as children unless the arrangement is expressly permitted and risk-assessed under current RFU guidance.
- Provide appropriate supervision without unnecessary entry. Adults should announce themselves and, wherever practicable, avoid being alone with one child.
- No photography, filming, video calls or device use capable of capturing images in changing or shower areas.
- Support children who need assistance through an agreed, individual plan involving parents/carers and appropriate club officers.
- Consider age, gender, disability, faith, privacy and transgender inclusion needs sensitively and make reasonable arrangements.
- Report sexualised behaviour, bullying, hazing, voyeurism or persistent boundary breaches immediately.
- Remove jewellery and body piercings as required for safe rugby participation; follow coaching and match-official safety instructions.
- Visiting teams and shared facilities must receive clear arrangements before use.

8. Transporting children and adults at risk

Purpose

To ensure transport connected with FRFC is planned, consented, appropriately insured and does not create avoidable one-to-one risk.

Parents/carers are normally responsible for transport. Where FRFC arranges or coordinates transport, a named organiser must oversee the arrangements.

- Obtain parent/carer consent, emergency contacts and relevant medical or accessibility information.
- Use roadworthy, insured vehicles and drivers who are legally entitled, fit and suitable to drive.
- Plan collection, handover, route, timings, supervision and action for delays or non-collection.
- Avoid one adult travelling alone with one child. Where unavoidable and genuinely necessary, obtain prior agreement, keep the journey transparent and record the reason and arrangements.
- Children must use seat belts and legally required restraints. Do not exceed passenger limits.
- Do not transport while impaired by alcohol, drugs, medication, fatigue or unsafe distraction.
- Do not make unauthorised changes to destinations or collect/drop off at private locations without agreement.
- Report incidents, breakdowns, late collection or safeguarding concerns promptly.

9. Trips, tours and overnight stays

Purpose

To plan off-site and overnight activity so that safeguarding, supervision, accommodation, travel, health and emergency arrangements are clear.

Approval and planning

1. Appoint a tour or trip lead. For age-grade tours, competitions, tournaments, festivals, rugby camps, cups and leagues, obtain the appropriate written prior approval through the RFU Approval of Activity process and/or Constituent Body. Ensure the activity follows Regulation 15, the Age Grade Playing Calendar and the permitted format. Where a third-party provider is used, record due diligence on its coaching, safeguarding, player-welfare, safety and insurance arrangements.
2. Complete a written risk assessment covering activity, travel, accommodation, supervision, free time, alcohol, online contact, medical needs and emergencies.
3. Obtain informed parent/carer consent and up-to-date emergency, medical, dietary and accessibility information.
4. Use suitable staffing, gender mix and supervision ratios based on age, needs, activity and current RFU requirements.
5. Confirm rooming arrangements that preserve privacy and prevent adults sharing rooms with children, except where an agreed care plan lawfully requires support.
6. Give everyone behavioural expectations, reporting routes, curfews and lost-person arrangements.
7. Carry emergency contacts, first-aid provision, insurance information and a communication plan.
8. Record and report incidents and review learning after the trip.
 - Alcohol must never compromise supervision. Adults responsible for children must remain fit to act.
 - No initiation ceremonies, hazing, sexualised games or humiliating forfeits.
 - Children must not enter adult bedrooms; adults must not enter a child's room alone except in an emergency and with transparent safeguards.
 - Personal devices and images remain subject to FRFC policy throughout the trip.

10. Missing child procedure

Purpose

To provide a rapid, coordinated response when a child cannot be located or fails to arrive or be collected as expected.

1. Confirm the child is missing and note the exact time and last known location. Alert the event lead and Club Safeguarding Officer without causing panic.
2. Assign adults to check agreed locations, toilets, changing areas, exits and the immediate venue. Do not leave other children inadequately supervised.
3. Contact the parent/carer and check authorised collection or agreed travel arrangements.
4. If there is immediate risk, suspicious circumstances, vulnerability, or the child is not found promptly, call 999. Follow police instructions.
5. Preserve relevant information: description, clothing, phone number, photograph if available, medical needs, last sighting and people present.
6. When found, check welfare privately, obtain medical help if needed and avoid blame. Do not conduct an investigative interview.
7. Record the incident, notifications, timings and actions; report safeguarding concerns through FRFC and RFU routes.
8. Review supervision, handover and venue controls before the next activity.

Late collection

A child must not be left alone. Keep at least two appropriate adults present where practicable, try all authorised contacts, record attempts and seek police/social-care advice if the situation becomes a welfare concern.

11. Complaints and whistleblowing

Purpose

To enable concerns about practice, conduct, culture or safeguarding to be raised without retaliation and routed to the appropriate process.

A complaint may concern service, behaviour or a club decision. Whistleblowing is the raising of a genuine concern about wrongdoing, danger, unlawful conduct, concealment or unsafe practice in the public interest. A safeguarding concern must never be delayed while deciding which label applies, and nobody may discourage a report to FRFC or the RFU.

- Raise safeguarding concerns with Sandra Lewis or directly with the RFU.
- Raise general club complaints with the relevant team lead or Chair.
- Where the concern involves the Club Safeguarding Officer, Chair or another senior officer, report directly to the RFU or appropriate statutory agency.
- Provide facts, dates, people involved, witnesses, evidence and immediate safety needs. Anonymous information will be considered, although it may limit follow-up.
- FRFC will acknowledge, triage, preserve records, identify conflicts of interest and use an impartial decision-maker.
- No person will be victimised for raising a genuine concern or supporting an enquiry. Deliberately false or malicious allegations may be addressed separately, but an unproven concern is not automatically malicious.
- Confidentiality will be respected as far as possible, but information may be shared where necessary for safety, fairness or legal/RFU requirements.

12. Incident recording, confidentiality and information sharing

Purpose

To ensure safeguarding information is accurate, secure, proportionate and available to those responsible for protecting people.

- Record promptly in clear, factual language and distinguish observation, disclosure, third-party information and professional opinion.
- Use the person's exact words where possible. Do not repeatedly question them.
- Include dates, times, locations, people present, immediate action, advice received and referrals made.
- Use the FRFC Safeguarding Concern and Referral Form and keep a chronological follow-up log.
- Submit the concern using the designated RFU safeguarding webform so it enters the RFU case-management system securely and creates a clear audit trail.
- Store safeguarding records separately from general team files with access limited to authorised people.
- Send information through secure channels and verify recipients before sending.
- Share information that is necessary, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely and secure. Safeguarding information may be shared without consent where necessary to protect a child or adult at risk, but the reason must be recorded.
- Do not discuss safeguarding matters in team chats, social media, open committee minutes or public areas.
- Retain and dispose of records in line with RFU requirements, legal duties and the club's data-protection arrangements.

Appendix A. Key contacts and live reporting routes

Contact	Details
Immediate danger / urgent medical help	999
Non-emergency police	101
FRFC Club Safeguarding Officer	Sandra Lewis, Club Safeguarding Officer safeguarding@fairfordrfc.co.uk
FRFC Chair	Lorna Pugh, Chair chair@fairfordrfc.co.uk
RFU safeguarding referral	www.englandrugby.com/run/safeguarding/sharing-concerns
RFU Safeguarding Team	safeguarding@rfu.com 020 8831 6655 (unmanned line; leave a message)
Gloucestershire Children's Helpdesk	01452 426565 childrenshelpdesk@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Gloucestershire Adult Helpdesk	01452 426868 socialcare.enq@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Childline	0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk
NSPCC Helpline	0808 800 5000 help@nspcc.org.uk

Check before publication

Contact details and RFU web routes may change. The Club Safeguarding Officer should check the live RFU and Gloucestershire County Council pages at least annually and whenever a printed poster or policy is replaced.

Appendix B. Annual safeguarding checklist

- Complete the 2026 RFU Annual Club Safeguarding Audit in the questionnaire tab of GMS by Sunday 25 October 2026.
- Record Committee approval and review; confirm the Club Safeguarding Officer and cover arrangements on GMS and club communications.
- Confirm every eligible person aged 16 or over applied for an RFU DBS within four weeks; monitor Update Service or three-year renewals.
- Check required learning through England Rugby Learning and complete coach, volunteer and team-manager induction.
- Confirm age-grade players, including non-contact players, are registered annually on GMS within the Regulation 15 45-day deadlines. Check the Playing Calendar and retain required playing-out-of-age-grade and activity approvals. Review emergency, first-aid, AED, changing-room, transport, tour and online arrangements.
- Refresh parent/carer information and consent records; securely review concerns, low-level concerns and resulting actions.
- Check website contacts and reporting links and remove superseded versions.