

Child Protection Policy

Club Welfare Officer: Andrew Vaughan Deputy: George Nightingale
(Head Coach)

Vectis Rugby Football Club are strongly committed to the protection and welfare of the children in their care. All of the children have the right to be protected and treated fairly. We will continue to assess our Child Welfare Policy to ensure that such care is being given and that the policy covers the needs of the children. Any divergence from our policy by any member or associate of the club will not be tolerated. Further, any child whom we suspect is being mistreated outside of the club will be entitled to our full protection.

Our policy on child welfare is aimed at all those actively involved in our club or associated with our club. Every person involved with our club has a responsibility for both ensuring the safety and wellbeing of any child and for reporting all cases of suspected child abuse.

Our policy is designed to safeguard against any type of abuse. It defines abuse as the following:

1. **Neglect:** If adults fail to meet a child's basic physical needs – for example for food, warmth and clothing or emotional needs for attention and affection. It occurs if children or young people are left alone or inadequately supervised or exposed to danger or injury or extremes of weather. In rugby, neglect could occur if children are inadequately supervised, clothed or allowed or encouraged to play with an injury.
2. **Physical Abuse:** If people physically hit, shake or in some way hurt or injure children or fail to prevent such injuries from happening. In rugby, physical abuse could happen; where training methods are inappropriate for the developmental age of the child, where they are allowed to play with an injury or where alcohol or inappropriate drugs are offered or tolerated.
3. **Sexual Abuse:** If children are used to meeting another person's sexual needs. This includes any form of sexual behaviour with the child by an adult or another child, the use of sexually explicit language, inappropriate touching, intimate relationships and exposure to pornographic material. In rugby, care must be taken to avoid intimate relationships, inappropriate touching and the improper use of photographic material taken at training sessions or matches.
4. **Emotional Abuse:** This often occurs in conjunction with other forms of abuse and bullying. It can be inflicted by other young people as well as by adults. It includes frequent threatening, taunting or sarcastic behaviour, the persistent withholding of affection or extreme overprotection. It includes racist or sexist behaviour and initiation ceremonies. In rugby, coaches or parents might emotionally abuse children if they give constant criticism, abuse their power or impose unrealistic pressure to perform to a high standard.
5. **Bullying:** This is a form of verbal, physical and emotional abuse. Children may bully each other and sometimes adults (for example parents or coaches) bully children. It includes taunting, shouting and screaming at young players. Bullying is not acceptable in any form. Bullying between children typically takes place when adults are not present, such as in a changing room or on the way to or from rugby.

Guidance For Best Practice

All those with direct involvement with the club should familiarize themselves with our own codes of conduct and the RFU Codes of Practice for the level with which they are involved i.e. coaches, players, referees, parents, spectators.

Coaches in particular often find themselves in positions of considerable influence, power and trust. They need to manage this power very carefully and maintain a safe boundary between themselves and players.

Best practice means:

- conducting all interactions with children in a public place and with parental consent.
- avoiding situations where you are alone with one child.
- if you are traveling with a child gain parental consent.
- avoiding consistently having one child alone with you.
- never sharing a room on your own with a child.
- never ignoring bullying by parents, coaches or children.
- maintaining an appropriate relationship with children.
- respecting all young players.
- avoiding unnecessary physical contact with children. (Touching can be ok if not intrusive or disturbing for the player e.g. it may be appropriate to put your arm around an injured or upset player to comfort him or her.)
- ensuring that your practice is appropriate for the age and developmental stage of each player.
- all coaches are qualified and up-to-date.

Our procedures and guidelines have been adopted by Vectis Rugby Union Football Club for three main reasons.

- 1.** To ensure the safety, health and welfare of children and good practice of club operations.
- 2.** To protect the interests of club members and coaches.
- 3.** To comply with the requirements of The Children Act. (The Children Act (1989) became law in October 1991, and is a major piece of legislation affecting children, their parents and those who work with children).

Procedures and Guidelines

- Only recognized coaches/volunteers and recognized/authorized visitors/parents/guardians will be permitted on site during training sessions/matches.
- All coaches will attend the RFU Child Protection and Best Practice course and copies of certification held by the Child Welfare Officer.
- All coaches, committee members and on-site volunteers must be checked by the Criminal Records Bureau and copies of clearance held by the Child Welfare Officer.
- All coaches, committee members and volunteers must familiarize themselves with this policy and sign record kept by the Child Welfare Officer.
- A copy of this policy is to be given to all parents on registration of their child.
- Only officially appointed Minis/Junior Coaches will be permitted to control Vectis RUFC activities.

- All children under 8 years of age must be accompanied by a parent/guardian when arriving and leaving the Club unless written agreement is provided otherwise beforehand.
- Every child must be signed in on the register when arriving.
- No child is permitted to leave the site without parental consent during coaching sessions.
- Children will not be released from the Club's facilities to anyone who is not recognised as the official collector of the child.
- Equipment shall be suitable, child centred, and in good repair.
- Accurate records shall be properly maintained for each child including details of names, address, telephone, emergency contact, details of health and necessary confidential notes.
- Any personal details/information about any child will be kept completely confidential by the staff having access to it.
- Details of all coaches/volunteers will also be kept on record.
- All coaches/relevant volunteers will be checked by the Criminal Records Bureau.

- **Child Protection**

As the provider of mini/junior coaching sessions and games all of our members and coaches have a duty of care to protect all children under their supervision from possible cases or causes of abuse. Our members' and coaches main role in the protection of children will be:

- To report any suspicion they may have about possible cases of abuse using the following procedures.
- To be aware of the symptoms children may display if suffering from any form of abuse. For example, the child might show;
 - physical signs such as unusual bruising; and injuries, untreated medical problems like continual stomach pains, weight loss, inadequate hygiene and general poor health.
 - Behavioural signs such as refusal to attend training or club activities or to be with a specific adult; poor concentration or unexplained changes in performance in rugby; sexually explicit language or behaviour; increased aggression, withdrawn, disinterested or depressed behaviour.

Remember that signs can occur for other reasons. However, a cluster of unexplained signs over a period of time could trigger unease or alarm and then you do need to act. Children may cover it up but if they tell you, stay calm, reassure and listen rather than ask questions. Don't promise not to tell anyone for you will have to tell someone in order for it to stop. The fact that the child is telling you probably means he or she is ready for something to be done about it. Remember, it is not up to you to decide whether abuse is taking place or what needs to be done. It is, however, your responsibility to share your concerns.