Oxford Rugby Football Club Ltd

Safeguarding Policy

Updated August 2026

Review date August 2028

"Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families and carers have a role to play in safeguarding children.

To fulfill this responsibility effectively, professionals should make sure their approach is child-centered. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child."
Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026)

"No single professional can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances. If children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action."
Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026)

"The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) are most likely to have a complete safeguarding picture and be the most appropriate person to advise on the response to safeguarding concerns." Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026)

Oxford Rugby Football Club (ORFC) Safeguarding Policy

1. Introduction

This policy is fully compliant with RFU Regulation 21 (Safeguarding), RFU Regulation 15 (Age Grade Rugby), and aligns with statutory guidance including Working Together to Safeguard Children and local Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults/Children Boards (OSCB) protocols.

Key Principles:

1. ***Paramountcy: The welfare of the child or adult at risk is always the primary consideration.***
2. ***Equality: All participants, regardless of age, sex, gender identity, disability, race, religion, or sexual orientation, have an equal right to protection from harm.***
3. ***Shared Responsibility: Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility—executives, coaches, volunteers, match officials, parents, and players.***
4. ***Child-Centred & Adult-Focused Practice: All allegations, suspicions, or concerns will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly, fairly, and confidentially.***

Oxford Rugby Football Club (ORFC) acknowledges its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children involved in rugby activities at the Club. The safety and well-being of children is of paramount importance and takes precedence over all other considerations.

ORFC fully endorses and adheres to the Rugby Football Union (RFU) Safeguarding Policy, its associated procedures, practices, and guidelines, including any updates or successor documents.

RFU Safeguarding Guidelines: https://www.englandrugby.com/run/safeguarding

In line with the RFU's definition, a *child* is any individual under the age of 18 participating in rugby union activities. Where players under the age of 18 (specifically U17s) are involved in adult rugby, the Club must comply with specific RFU protocols and documentation requirements. This includes being an accredited club in accordance with RFU regulations for Age Grade Rugby.

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2. Safeguarding Principles

ORFC is committed to the following core principles of safeguarding:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All participants—regardless of age, gender, race, ability, disability, faith, culture, sexual orientation, language, or background—have the right to protection from harm, abuse, or neglect.

- Any allegation, suspicion, or concern relating to abuse, neglect, harm, or poor practice will be taken seriously, and dealt with promptly, fairly, and appropriately.

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3. Reporting Concerns

All safeguarding concerns or suspicions must be reported immediately to the Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO):

Designated Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO): *Federica Romei* ✉ romei.federica@gmail.com

Important:
Club members must not undertake their own investigations.

If a member feels that a safeguarding issue is not being handled appropriately, they should escalate their concern to the Club Chair:

Club Chair: ✉ chairman@oxfordrfc.com

The CSO will escalate the matter to the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Officer (SO), as well as the RFU Safeguarding Team.

Oxfordshire Safeguarding Officer: *Contact:* ✉ Sam Cartland Email: oxfordshirerfusafeguarding@gmail.com Contact number: +44 7792 868327 CB …

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4. External Safeguarding Contacts

Organisation	Contact Details
Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	✉ mash-children@oxfordshire.gov.uk 📞 0345 050 7666
Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB)	✉ oscb@oxfordshire.gov.uk 📞 01865 815843
Designated Officer (Alison Beasley)	✉ alison.beasley@oxfordshire.gov.uk 📞 01865 815956

Emergency Duty Team	0800 833 408
Police (Non-Emergency / Emergency)	101 / 999
Prevent (Radicalisation)	counterextremism@education.gsi.gov.uk 020 7340 7264
Childline	0800 1111
National Bullying Helpline	0845 225 5787
NSPCC Helpline / Textline (24/7)	0808 800 5000 Text: 88858
NSPCC FGM Helpline	fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk 0800 028 3550

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5. Safer Recruitment & Training

Safe Recruitment & Training Framework

ORFC operates a strict Safer Recruitment Policy for all positions involving access to under-18s or adults at risk:

1. *Enhanced DBS Checks: Mandatory for all coaches, team managers, first aiders, and regular volunteers in age-grade rugby prior to commencing unsupervised activity. DBS renewals are required every 3 years.*
2. *References & Applications: All new volunteers must complete the official RFU Volunteer Application Form and provide two independent references.*
3. *Mandatory Qualifications & Training:*
    - *All coaches/officials must complete the online RFU Introduction to Safeguarding.*
    - *Age-Grade Head Coaches and Team Managers must attend the face-to-face RFU Play It Safe workshop within 6 months of appointment.*
    - *The CSO must maintain up-to-date certification in In Touch training.*

Code of Conduct & Operational Guidelines

Coaching Practice & Physical Contact

- Physical contact during training must strictly serve a skill development purpose (e.g., tackling technique) and must always take place in an open, visible environment.
- Coaches must never engage in 1-on-1 closed-door sessions or personal physical discipline.

Adult-to-Child Ratios (Training & Matches)
ORFC adheres strictly to RFU-mandated supervision ratios:

- Under 7s (U6/U7): 1 adult to 6 children $(1:6)$
- Under 8s (U8): 1 adult to 8 children $(1:8)$
- Ages 9–18 (U9 to U18): 1 adult to 10 children $(1:10)$
  At least two DBS-checked adults must be present at every session regardless of group size.

Changing Room & Showering Protocols

- Adults (coaches, parents, volunteers) must never shower or change alongside under-18 players.
- Dual-adult supervision (DBS checked) is required outside changing areas when young players are changing.
- Mobile phones, cameras, and recording devices are strictly prohibited inside changing rooms.

Tours, Trips & Travel

- All club tours (domestic and international) must be pre-approved by the Executive Committee and submitted to the Constituent Body (CB) via RFU Tour Approval Forms.
- Parents must explicitly consent to transport arrangements. Adults must never travel alone 1-on-1 with a child who is not their own without prior written consent and notification to the CSO.

Digital Communications & Social Media

- Coaches and volunteers must never communicate directly with under-18s via personal social media, direct messaging, or personal phone numbers.
- All communications must go through official club channels or directly to parents/guardians.
- Media/Photography: Written parental consent is collected at annual registration. Photography/video is restricted to official match reporting and must follow RFU guidelines.

17-Year-Olds in Adult Rugby

Under RFU Regulation 15, male and female players aged 17 may play or train in adult rugby only when:

1. An official RFU Playing Adult Rugby Consent Form is fully executed, signed by the parent/guardian and Club CSO/Chair.

2. A formal Risk Assessment is conducted assessing the player's physical and psychological readiness.
3. Adult changing room safeguards apply fully—17-year-olds are protected under child safeguarding standards until their 18th birthday.

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6. Unacceptable Practices

The following behaviours are strictly prohibited at ORFC:

- Working alone with children.
- Consuming alcohol or smoking while supervising children.
- Providing alcohol or cigarettes to children.
- Humiliating children (physically, emotionally, socially, or verbally).
- Engaging in inappropriate or unnecessary physical contact.
- Participating in contact or physical games with children, including holding tackle shields.
- Forming or pursuing intimate or sexual relationships with any child under their supervision.
- Making sexually explicit comments or sharing inappropriate content with a child.

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7. Working in Partnership

ORFC is committed to working in partnership with children, parents, carers, and external agencies where necessary to ensure the highest standards of safeguarding and child protection are maintained.

What to do if a child or adult discloses abuse:

- DO: Stay calm, listen carefully, reassure them that they were right to speak up, and explain that you must share the information with the Safeguarding Officer to help keep them safe.
- DO NOT: Promise total secrecy, ask leading questions, or attempt to investigate the matter yourself.
- RECORD: Write down exact statements, dates, times, and observable physical indicators within 12 hours using the ORFC Incident Form.

Policy Adoption & Annual Review

This policy was formally adopted by the Executive Committee of Oxford Rugby Football Club on 1st September 2026 and applies across the 2026/27 and 2027/28 seasons.

- Review Schedule: Annual audit every August ahead of the new playing season.
- Approved by: Club Chair & Club Safeguarding Officer.