

RFU Safeguarding Update March 2021

Volunteer Recruitment Form

The use of the volunteer application form is not compulsory from an RFU Regulation perspective at the present time. There is no current reference to it in Regulation 21, but this is likely to change in the future to reflect the requirements of Government and Sport England.

The need for safer recruitment for those who work in regulated activity for children is highlighted in the statutory guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#). Sporting organisations are specifically referenced in this document.

As indicated in the safeguarding policy and toolkit, all children and adults at risk are entitled to protection from harm and be able to take part in sport in a safe, positive and enjoyable environment. When recruiting employees or volunteers all reasonable steps must be taken to ensure only suitable people are selected.

A thorough recruitment process will help to identify those not suitable to work in this environment.

The NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit, who are tasked by Sport England with ensuring that funded NGBs are meeting safeguarding standards have a section on safer recruitment and the importance of it in protecting children from harm. It highlights the need for application forms, references, interviews etc.

<https://thecpsu.org.uk/self-assessment-tool/?state=1#prevention>

The RFU's process and recommendations are similar to those required in other sports, for example, these are the volunteer recruitment requirements of the FA.

To be clear, safer recruitment is specifically for those working with children, but many clubs who see themselves as a family environment are using similar recruitment tools for all club positions.

Employment and reference details are part of the safer recruitment process and are good practice when recruiting volunteers. It helps volunteers to demonstrate their experience outside of rugby and gives an opportunity for those who have known an applicant to comment on their suitability to undertake the role that they are applying for.

Although we acknowledge that this is an additional layer of administration for our clubs, feedback from those clubs who have implemented the process (in some CBs it has been promoted for some time) has been largely positive.

The self-declaration section has enabled clubs to pause, prior to engagement with the DBS process if cautions or convictions have caused concern regarding suitability.

Volunteers have appreciated that the RFU follow similar recruitment procedures that are the norm in other settings; this assists in helping volunteers to feel safe in the organisation.

Parents appreciate that volunteers are recruited in a way that enhances the safety of their children.

Hopefully all of the above shows that the RFU's promotion of safer recruitment processes is in response to not only good practice, but also as a result of our statutory obligations and the expectations of those tasked with ensuring safe recruitment.

Safeguarding Training

Training department are keeping a close eye on Government advice and are planning for restart of indoor face to face training. This is for both Safeguarding and First Aid.

Safeguarding Team are currently looking at refreshing the In Touch so that it can be delivered virtually but still meet the required learning outcomes.

Girls Game

A number of issues have come to light despite limited / no rugby activity involving male coaches and inappropriate behaviour, potentially grooming, with female children they coach. This is less evident in the relationship between coaches and the male child participants – there could be a number of reasons for this.

Again this forms part of safer recruitment and balancing the need for coaches in the girls, ever growing game, and getting the right person with right motivations in place and providing training. This could be a point of further discussion.

Domestic violence

There have been reports passed to the RFU from outside agencies regarding conduct in a coach's private life which raised suitability around their work with children. Domestic violence, as reported in press, has increased during lockdowns and sadly children will witness this.

The return to rugby activity may find that coaches and others in a position of trust see changes in children, including direct comments by children, that may indicate safeguarding concerns. In addition, children may have experienced bereavement.

This is an area that we are looking at to provide further advice on.