



Best Practice & Governance Report

Date – 5 December 2023

Report compiled by Gary Robson

Key events, issues, and achievements since the last report.

Safeguarding –

- The RFU conducted an external audit of safeguarding in Northumberland. On 14/11/23 the results were received. These appear below for information and reflect well upon NRU CB and clubs.
- Several very long running RFU led safeguarding investigations following referral by NRU are ending (one of which has taken over 12 months). Follow up meetings with the RFU are planned to fully understand the outcomes and reasons for delay, in the hope of addressing understandable concerns at CB, club and parent level.
- Following an increasing crossover between safeguarding and discipline issues (particularly in relation to age grade issues) a meeting was held with relevant stakeholders on 4/12/23 and recommendations made for board ratification (attached).

RugbySafe –

- Ongoing liaison with clubs relating to all RS matters, including first aid courses and risk assessments.

Injured Player Welfare –

- Role remains vacant and covered by county administrator. Contact with several injured players ongoing.

Discipline & Compliance –

- One adult discipline hearing resulting from a citing by a Durham club, relating to an allegation of a punch to the head, supported by VEO evidence. The evidence was clearcut and the player accepted the charge.
- CBAGDS case involving the abandonment of a match between two educational establishments (Northumberland and Durham based) following the issue of four red cards – two from each side.
- 20/11/23 - presentation on discipline to the CB General Meeting at North Shields.

CB Medical –

- No issues to report

Neurodiversity –

- Working group has held a second meeting and currently has draft papers / documents out for consultation and review.

Current and impending issues, events, and work streams

Safeguarding –

- Several ongoing issues and referrals ongoing.
- Follow up meetings re finalised RFU investigations / decisions.

RugbySafe –

- Ongoing liaison re FA risk assessments
- Arrangements for RS club reps meeting early 2024

Injured Player Welfare –

- Recruitment of a IPWO

Discipline & Compliance –

- The second meeting of the national Regulation 19 Review Group has taken place and a number of tasks must be undertaken in advance of the next meeting on 14th December. It is anticipated that consultation with clubs and other interested parties will begin early in the new year.

CB Medical –

- Review of physio arrangements in response to revised rep rugby calendar.

Issues requiring Decision, Discussion or Dissemination

Decision –

- Ratification of proposals re safeguarding / discipline collaboration and communication (shown below) sought.

Discussion –

- Board response to delays encountered with Safeguarding and Discipline referrals to RFU.

NB – This report must not include personal or identifiable data. If there is a need to report on Confidential matters, please forward communication separately marked 'Confidential'

Northumberland - Safeguarding Report 22/23

Overview

It is everyone's role to safeguard the welfare of young children and create a safe environment in rugby union. Safeguarding children is of paramount importance and involves promoting a child-centred culture.

By completing this audit we are able to gain an understanding of current CB practices and procedures aligned to RFU policy and regulation. The review in conjunction with your CBRM is helping to ensure all clubs can provide a safe and enjoyable experience for all.

The snapshot has generated a specific CB report to capture your responses and importantly use locally to action plan accordingly on any development areas. This will also assist in shaping future provision and support within this vital area of the game.

Report

Date Completed	CBRM	CBSM	Name 1	Name 2	Name 3
18/10/23	Adam Cottingham	Mark Reade	Claire Sharpe - County Administrator	Gary Robson - Director of Governance & Best Practice	

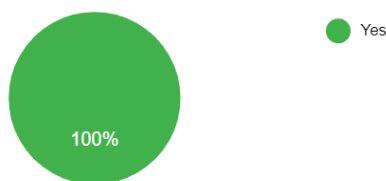
Section 1: Regulation & Policies

Regulation and Policy Qs	Responses	Comments	Agreed Actions
1.Appoints and manages a CBSM and ensures that the CBSM has representation or a reporting mechanism within the CB structure (Exec/Management/Board)	Yes	CBSM has a direct line into Board, and all Directors. Director of Gov & BP sits on the CB Board, and the CBSM reports into this role along with Discipline.	
2. The CB ensures all member clubs, with an age grade section or where there are 17-year-olds playing adult rugby, complete the RFU annual safeguarding audit.	Yes	CBSM monitors completion rates, and sends reminders to clubs yet to complete.	
3. The CBSM conducts a Safeguarding Audit with a minimum of 10% of member clubs per year, aligned to the RFU Safeguarding Policy	Yes	Deep-dives complete already and submitted.	
4. Ensures the CB and member Clubs providing Age Grade Rugby provision implements Safeguarding Procedures aligned to the RFU Policy and Regulations 15 & 21. This should reflect individual clubs' local authority requirements.	Yes	CB support RFU Club Developer work to support clubs in these areas.	
5. Ensures all appropriate* CB employees and volunteers (who require one) have completed the RFU DBS process, along with basic online safeguarding training (RFU Introduction to Safeguarding eLearning course), as a minimum.	Yes	Any coaches wishing to support Rep rugby teams have their qualifications checked beforehand.	
6. The CBSM to coordinate and support their member clubs with the RFU's DBS process.	Yes	CBSM and CB Administrator support clubs directly with this process, and signpost to appropriate Regulations.	
7. Ensures that any safeguarding concerns are reported to the RFU Safeguarding Team as outlined in the RFU Policy. Cases referred back to the CBSM from the RFU must be reviewed and resolved at a local level. CBSM to assist any Age Grade disciplinary matters.	Yes	CBSM works closely with RFU Safeguarding Team. Cases referred to Dir or G&BP in first instance. CBSM works closely with CB AGR lead.	

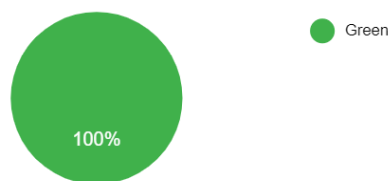
Section 2 - Best Practice

Best Practice Qs	Responses	Comments	Agreed Actions
1. CB to ensure there are sufficient number of safeguarding individuals (CBSMs) and assistants reflective of the size of the CB and number of clubs.	●	CBSM has the support in place to best support clubs. Dir G&BP former CSO to support CBSM in role. Central Administration system helps to monitor cases and case progress.	
2. CBSMs identify clubs training needs of their member clubs for delivery by the RFU Safeguarding Education Workforce (Play it Safe, In Touch, Safeguarding Conference, Webinars and informal support).	●	CB have identified training need across their clubs, and are implementing a training offer. Themed meeting have helped to broadcast key messages/updates to club reps.	
3. CBSMs communicate regularly with / and acquaint newly appointed Club Safeguarding Officers.	●	CB sit down with new CSOs to intro them to the role and support, including signposting them to appropriate Regulations and the DBS process.	
4. CBSMs have the infrastructure and support to communicate regularly with their CSOs. CB delivers at least one annual safeguarding conference/workshop/seminar for their Club Safeguarding Officers.	●	CB deliver to training events CSOs annually, and provide 1-to-1 support where needed.	

Regulations and Policies status



Best Practice Status



Additional Comments

Regular updates on case progress (i.e. once a month) from the Case Officer.
Physical resources - Safeguarding, Core Values etc.

Northumberland Rugby Union Draft Procedure Note

On Monday 4 December 2023 a meeting of relevant members of the Governance and Best Practice Panel was held at Northern RFC to discuss arrangements relating to collaboration and communication between county office, the CB discipline and safeguarding portfolios.

Internal and independent, external audits have taken place, relating to the CB safeguarding and discipline functions, over the past two seasons. Although these portfolios have been found to be performing very well, in any organisation it must be acknowledged that there is always room for improvement.

This season there have been several issues / incidents which have revealed, on occasion, there can be a disconnect and communication challenges involving safeguarding, county office, adult and age grade discipline. These incidents were debriefed at length and each portfolio lead reported themselves to have been unaware of some issues relevant to their portfolio at stages of this season.

To improve the situation, prevent recurrence of problems and deliver an enhanced service to our clubs the following procedure will apply in future,

- All issues relating to safeguarding, adult discipline and age grade discipline must be reported to the county administrator, however, they are received at the earliest opportunity.
- The county office will be the central depository for secure, GDPR compliant, retention of all documentation relating to safeguarding, adult discipline and age grade discipline.
- Sharing of reports relating to confidential safeguarding and discipline issues, relating to those under 18, will be on a strictly 'need to know' basis and all parties with access to this material will hold a current DBS clearance.
- Where there is any potential for an issue to overlap between discipline and safeguarding functions each of the relevant leads must be informed.
- The CB Discipline Secretary and Safeguarding Manager will lead on all matters relevant to their respective portfolios and will communicate directly regarding any potential cross-cutting issue.
- Where there is a relevant issue apparent, relating to age grade discipline the AGDS should be informed, wherever possible within 48 hours of receipt.
- All parties will exercise care to ensure they do not make decisions or communicate views which are outside of their individual remit.

This procedure is compliant with current relevant legislation and RFU regulation.

This draft procedure will be shared with the NRU board for ratification.