RugbySafe Report 2025-26

RugbySafe is the RFU's overarching initiative to support player welfare at all levels of the game. It covers the elements of Playing Environment, Research, The Game, Education and Development, Values and Culture.

In recent years Women and Girls Health ahs also come under the RugbySafe banner. This season we ran two Female Health Event with speakers Jojo Maddison Specialist Physiotherapist and Lindsay McNaughton Professor of Nutrition. These events were well attended by age-grade and adult players and coaches from the Women and Girls game across the CB. A third event is being run for Newcastle Ravens alongside our Inclusion and Diversity representatives.

The RFU Emergency First Aid in Rugby Union course was withdrawn due to issues out with the control of the RFU around HMRC, new employment laws and also the changing requirements of qualification awarding bodies that come with delivering a national qualification. A new system was introduced with the RFU providing a Tutor Map of Training Providers who had applied to the RFU to be on there. Tutors had to be delivering Level 3 Emergency First Aid at Work, or equivalent courses, and meet standards expected of Regulation 9. There "RFU recognised" tutors were provided with materials to enhance Emergency First Aid at Work courses to ensure that rugby specific material can still be delivered.

I was successful in being accredited by Qualsafe as an awarding body to deliver Level 3 Emergency First Aid at Work. I therefore set up another trading arm of my business, CC Rugby First Aid Training, and was accepted onto the RFU Tutor Map. I have also taken on two other former RFU tutors; Andrew Wilkinson and Joanne Chadwick. Andrew is based in Northumberland and Joanne is based in Yorkshire. We have thus far delivered courses in Northumberland, Durham, Cumbria, Yorkshire and whichever CB Sale Sharks comes under. In Northumberland alone we have delivered six courses this season. We have one booked on behalf of Northumberland CB for the end of August.

I will add that other providers are available! However, please ensure that any course delivered meets the standards set out by the RFU. You find all the information here: https://www.englandrugby.com/run/player-welfare/pitch-side-first-aid-immediate-care#1737095712-1388541592

I will just take this opportunity to remind all clubs that under Regulation 9 it is recommended that all teams have a First Aider who has completed an Emergency First Aid at Work qualification or equivalent, which the RFU course was.

Also under Regulation 9 is the requirement that ALL clubs MUST complete a First Aid Risk Assessment and record that this has been completed on the Player Welfare page of GMS. This season Howden's launched an online Risk Assessment Tool which is excellent and takes clubs through a step-by-step process for their Risk Assessment, compliant with Howden's the RFU Insurers. This can be accessed via the Player Welfare page on GMS.

This season I completed Regulation 9 Audits on three clubs as requested by the RFU. This is something that will be happening each season now. If any clubs would like a copy of the audit tool please do get in touch. It serves as a good way to check that your club is regulation 9 compliant.

We also underwent a Regulation 9 audit as a CB. I am happy to report that Northumberland CB continues to be praised for our approach to RugbySafe and player welfare. Our Immediate Care and Physiotherapy/Sports Therapy set up for CB Representative Rugby was particularly

highlighted as one of the best in the country by the RFU Head of Player Welfare. As a result it seems I may be asked to help with producing guidelines on best practice going forwards.

This season we continued using the Proactive Injury Reporting Tool for CB Representative Rugby. This has proved a valuable tool, allowing the CB Physios and Sports Therapists to record injuries and share that information within our team as necessary. Proactive is something that I would still encourage clubs to look at to make sure they are meeting the requirements of injury and incident reporting and being GDPR compliant. It also reduced admin time if an injury is one which requires reporting to the RFU you simply tick a box. Likewise, if the injury occurred on a rugby365 AGP. The concussion tracker allows coaches, players, parents and physios to keep a track of where players are at in their GRAS. It sends an immediate email and/or text to the player or parent involved. However, it does not share any information out with the player's club. Therefore, we still need Clubs to utilise the Northumberland Suspected Concussion Reporting Forms and Injury Report forms as and when necessary.

Concussion continues to be a very important issue. The Suspected Concussion Reporting process has continued in Northumberland with facilitated communication between players, parents, Clubs, Schools, Universities and Representative Rugby. The process continues to be very positive and goes above and beyond what the Proactive concussion tracker can do by having information disseminated, with consent, outside the club that the injury occurred in where required. It saves a lot of leg work for players, coaches and parents and ensures that players are kept safe from further harm when these events occur. I must thank Claire Sharpe the County Administrator for her good work and support as without her this protocol of reporting and dissemination would most certainly not be possible. I also thank all coaches, teachers, first aiders, Physios, Club RugbySafe Leads, and others who have submitted forms this season. However, I do think we have had massive under reporting again this season, either that or some clubs have players with canny hard heads! I will therefore be making a renewed effort to spread the word amongst clubs, schools and universities next season.

Last reminder for all; the role of Club RugbySafe Lead is a Golden Role and as such every club must appoint a RugbySafe Lead and ensure that role is updated on GMS. If this position is vacant in your club, please reach out for some help and guidance. This season I have supported two clubs in filling this role and it is very much part of my role to support all clubs with this.

Cathryn Clark
NRU RugbySafe Lead