

## **Guidance to CBs, Clubs and Schools on Serious Injury Management**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the event of a serious injury occurring in rugby it is vitally important that an appropriate response is initiated which primarily addresses the needs of the injured individual, their next of kin, and those involved, but also secondarily, protect the assets and reputation of the club, the RFU and the game of rugby football.

### **BACKGROUND**

Serious injuries and deaths are very rare in rugby union. When they occur however, they need to be managed effectively and appropriately. By establishing clear procedures within your Constituent Body (CB) and Club on how to manage a serious injury incident, the following benefits should be realised:

- Improved immediate care of the injured player;
- Improved support to the injured player and their next of kin;
- Improved support to clubs and officials;
- Improved safety of the game;
- Improved protection of the assets of the club, and the reputation of the game of rugby.

### **DEFINITION OF SERIOUS INJURY**

It is not possible to give a precise definition of what constitutes a serious injury because some injuries may appear very serious initially and should be managed as such, but subsequently turn out to be minor, and vice-versa. For the purposes of these guidelines, it is recommended that they are applied if the following injuries are sustained or suspected:

- Suspected spinal injury
- Suspected head injury (other than concussion)
- Suspected internal injury
- Suspected severe limb injury
- Fatality

### **RESPONSE TO A VERY SERIOUS INJURY**

It is considered that there are three main elements in the response to a very serious injury affecting a player. These elements are; Management, Welfare and Medical, and are shown in Figure 1. The RFU Serious Injury Response Protocol is at Annex A.

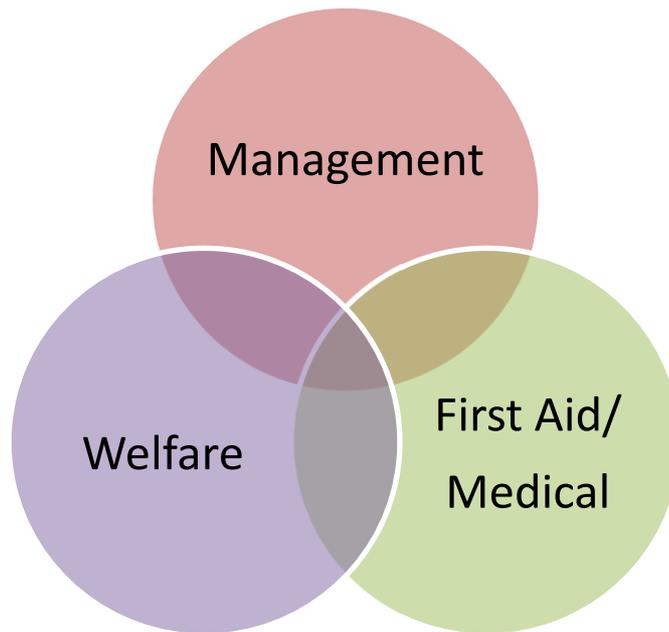


Figure 1: Reportable Injury Event Response Model

In dealing with such an incident there will be a Club Response which will need to be delivered within the club and RFU Support delivered by RFU Executive Staff and or CB officers to support the player and club. Guidance for clubs and CBs on how to effectively deal with such incidents are detailed below, with generic resources included in the subsequent Annexes, to help CBs and Clubs develop their own procedures and internal resources.

## **CLUB RESPONSE**

### Preparation

The initial response at the scene will be dealt with under the Club's Emergency Procedures. These should be documented and made available to appropriate individuals in the CB/Club e.g.:

- Committee Members
- Managers
- Coaches
- First aid and medical staff/providers

Guidance on how a Club can respond effectively within the three key areas is detailed below and a generic Serious Injury Emergency Procedures Protocol is at Annex C. Emergency contact telephone numbers and routine information to give to the emergency services should be posted next to the emergency phone.

Please refer to RFU guidance on the provision of first aid/medical care. All coaches and team managers must know how to summon the Club's first aid or medical assistance. All first aid and medical kits and equipment must be kept stocked and in good working order.

## Management

The Club Duty Manager or Responsible Person should be informed and take responsibility for the overall management of the incident response as soon as practicable. All clubs should have a nominated Duty Manager present at the club on all match days (and Youth Section training days on Sunday mornings where held), and a nominated Responsible Person present whenever the club facilities are in use. This person should not also be responsible for delivery of first aid or medical care at the same time.

The tasks for this individual will therefore include the following:

- Initial overall management of the response including:
  - Ensure medical staff/first aider is attending injured person and has sufficient assistance.
  - Ensure an ambulance is or has been called if appropriate (if in doubt telephone emergency services) and they know the location of the incident.
  - Ensure a responsible person is positioned to meet the ambulance at an appropriate location to guide it to the incident.
  - Ensure the ambulance access route is clear of obstructions. Consider the need for an air ambulance landing. If ambulance access on to the pitch is required, and particularly if an air ambulance has been sent, ensure all training and matches in the vicinity are stopped.
  - Ensure next of kin are informed if appropriate
- Initial information management relating to the incident i.e.:
  - Ensure appropriate details (including contact details) are recorded of all persons involved in the incident i.e. players, coaches, referee, touch judges, first aid/medical personnel, witnesses.
  - Inform club officials of the incident.
  - Formal reporting of the Reportable Injury Event to the RFU. This process and a copy of the RIE Report Form are at Annex B
  - Notify the Constituent Body.
  - Notify the Clubs' insurers.

Before the club initiates any internal investigation they should seek legal advice, which is available through the RFU Legal Helpline [0844 56 18177 quoting scheme number 81066]

## First Aid/Medical

There is variation in the level of pitch-side care provided at matches, reflecting the level at which the game is being played. As a minimum, First Aid trained personnel and equipment, with access to the Emergency Medical Services should be available at all matches and contact training sessions. Some clubs have sufficient resources to provide a physiotherapist and/or doctor, who should be appropriately trained in pitch side immediate care. Initial pitch side care will be provided by the First Aider, Physiotherapist or Doctor until care is handed over to the NHS ambulance crew.

Some key points for the squad manager and/or coach to remember in the event of a serious injury:

- **DO NOT** move the casualty.
- Keep calm, reassure casualty and keep them warm.
- Summon the first-aider/medical personnel to scene.
- Remain with the casualty until first-aider arrives
- Move other players away from scene and ensure they are supervised and protected from the weather.
- Arrange for next of kin to be notified if not present.
- Arrange for the injured player to be accompanied to hospital if no next of kin present.

Acute medical care for all injured players (beyond pitch side) is provided by the NHS (or Host Nation Medical Authorities when on overseas tours). All seriously injured players will be admitted to a hospital; in some case this will be a specialist unit i.e. spinal unit. Subsequent care for such seriously injured players will also be provided by the NHS, following repatriation in the case of injuries occurring overseas. To this end the club must ensure that all those responsible for first aid/medical support at the club should contact their local hospitals so that they have a real understanding of the processes that would be put in place should there be a very serious injury at their ground or when they are on tour.

The role of the club's first aid or medical cover will include the following:

- Provide appropriate safe and optimal on-field care;
- Hand over care to the NHS paramedics on their arrival;
- Maintaining appropriate records of treatment given.

The Club should not forget the other players who were on the pitch when the injury occurred and who may be emotionally traumatised as a result of it. The Club should seek advice from the RFU Injured Player Welfare Officer [IPWO] on how best to deal with this within the club setting, while advising any players who are particularly emotionally traumatised to consult their GP about formal psychological support. There is insufficient evidence to support the use of routine group formal psychological debriefing or counselling.

### Welfare Support

The Club should nominate an individual as soon as possible to take responsibility for ensuring that the injured player and next of kin receive appropriate welfare support from the club. In the event of an incident, the RFU Injured Player Welfare Officer will provide the club with advice on how they can provide this support effectively.

### Referees Report

The referee should complete a **Referee Society Injury Event Form**, a copy of which is attached at Annex D. The report should:

1. include a short factual summary of what happened
2. record details of the teams, team captains, touch judges, referee, coaches, any medical staff and, if possible, relevant spectators
3. not contain any speculation, opinion or guess work
4. be in the referee's own words and should reflect the language used by the referee
5. record if the captains' score cards were submitted to the Referees Society

When complete, the report should be submitted to the local Referees' Society and the RFU Referee Manager, Mike Patz, at either [MichaelPatz@rfu.com](mailto:MichaelPatz@rfu.com) or to Rugby House, 200 Whitton Road, Twickenham TW2 7BA. The form should be retained by the Referees' Society for a period of 6 years

It is important that the referee records the event whilst it is clear in his/her mind. If the referee has any concerns about completing the report or requires assistance, he/she should not hesitate to contact either the local Society secretary or Referee Manager.

If the referee receives any communications from third party lawyers, these should be sent directly to his/her local society, for onward transmission to the RFU Legal Department via Alys Lewis, at [AlysLewis@rfu.com](mailto:AlysLewis@rfu.com). The injured party's advisors will often approach various sources seeking to obtain information such as the Club, individuals, the Referees' Society and/or the referee, and therefore any correspondence or telephone calls received from lawyers representing injured parties should be referred to the RFU's Legal Officer.

### **CONSTITUENT BODY SUPPORT**

Constituent Bodies (CBs) also have a role to play in helping clubs to manage such incidents and in supporting those involved. Where the CB has representative teams, it will need to take on the club role for those players during their team training and games.

Ways in which the CB can support include:

1. Provide support to club, player(s), family and officials, in conjunction with the RFU IPWO.
2. In conjunction with RFU Communications Dept and club officials, manage media contact.
3. Assist club/player with any fund raising activities as required.

### **RFU SUPPORT**

On receipt of notification of such an incident, the RFU will support clubs and players directly, in a number of ways.

#### **Management**

The support available to clubs from the RFU in the management of an incident of this nature is as follows:

- The club should contact their RFU Regional Press Officer who will be able to assist in terms of media management and putting in place arrangements with the RFU.
- Legal counsel is likely to lead on the RFU support in the management of the incident which will include the following:
  - Notification of the RFU Insurers;
  - Notify the press office;
- Co-ordinate any formal safety investigations that may be required:
  - Where appropriate, arrange for the appointment of external advisers to any investigation initiated by the RFU. Clubs should not appoint

experts to investigate an incident without legal advice being obtained first;

- Co-ordinate the preparation of any RFU lead investigation report;
- Notify the Regulatory Authorities (if applicable);
- Advise on any communications received from third party's lawyers.

### Medical

The RFU maintains and analyses a database of all Reportable Injury Events. Where appropriate, the Game Development Medical Director will collate any injury surveillance data that is appropriate. General advice on medical issues will also be available from the RFU Chief Medical Officer for Premiership Clubs, and from the Game Development Medical Dept for all other levels of the game.

### Welfare Support

The RFU Injured Player Welfare Officer (IPWO) is responsible for co-ordinating the RFU's welfare response to support Very Seriously Injured (VSI) player's immediate welfare needs. While he/she will respond to all serious injuries reported, only those players in most need i.e. those fulfilling the definition of VSI will be entered into the formal support programme.

The IPWO provides a focal point within the RFU for VSI player welfare. He/she is responsible for the following:

- The welfare reporting process.
- Providing and co-ordinating RFU welfare support to VSI players.
- Advising clubs on providing support to VSI players.
- Monitoring long term support provided to VSI players.
- Maintaining RFU welfare support information resources.
- Coordinating the provision of Player Welfare Support Packages and Family Support Packages.
- Liaising with National Charities, spinal injury and head injury units on behalf of the RFU on welfare issues.
- Coordinating, regional VSI player forums.

### Family and Social Support:

Family and social support from friends to VSI players is the most important support that a player receives. When a player is admitted to hospital with a VSI they may be some distance from their home and their family may not be able to afford or arrange to visit and stay. The RFU can facilitate such support, especially in the early stages following an injury. The stresses involved for the family are considerable and anything that relieves some of this stress in these early days will have a very positive impact on their ability to provide support to the VSI player and provide a positive association with the RFU. Also, if the player has a long stay in hospital i.e. spinal unit, their ability to communicate with family and friends will provide huge psychological support. The facilities in spinal units vary considerably, with only some currently providing email access, TVs DVDs, etc...

The RFU will (via the RFU Injured Players Foundation, IPF) provide real practical help at this stage to VSI players and their families, because it is able and prepared to react more quickly than other sources in the following ways:

- Provide financial assistance for travel, accommodation and subsistence.
- Assist the family with travel and accommodation arrangements.
- Provide appropriate entertainment and communication technology to VSI players in long stay units.
- Provide a Resource Pack which contains useful information and contacts for further support.

Club Support:

The IPWO is also available to provide advice to clubs on how they can best support injured players and on how they can fund raise effectively. There is a resource pack available which will guide clubs and provide useful contacts.

## RFU Serious Injury Response Protocol

---

---

### RFU Injured Player Welfare Officer

The RFU has an Injured Player Welfare Officer (IPWO), who coordinates welfare support to very seriously injured players, their family and their club. The IPWO is your first point of contact within the RFU in the event of a serious injury to a player's head or neck, or fatality.

---

---

In the event of a serious injury to a player's head or neck, or fatality, the following protocol is to be followed:

#### Club Response:

1. Provide immediate on-field medical care/first aid.
2. Contact the emergency services (Dial: 999 and ask for Ambulance) and provide details and location of the incident.
3. Ensure ambulance access (+/- air ambulance access).
4. Notify next of kin that player has been injured or taken ill and taken to hospital.
5. Accurately record details of all persons involved in the incident (players, coaches, referee(s) witnesses, medical/first aid personnel).
6. Notify [sportsinjuriesadmin@therfu.com](mailto:sportsinjuriesadmin@therfu.com), **0800 298 0102**
7. Notify Constituent Body Welfare Officer or Secretary
8. Complete Reportable Injury Event Form and forward to RFU Serious Injuries Administrator (SIA) (by email, fax, or post)
9. Provide support to player(s), family, and officials, as required.

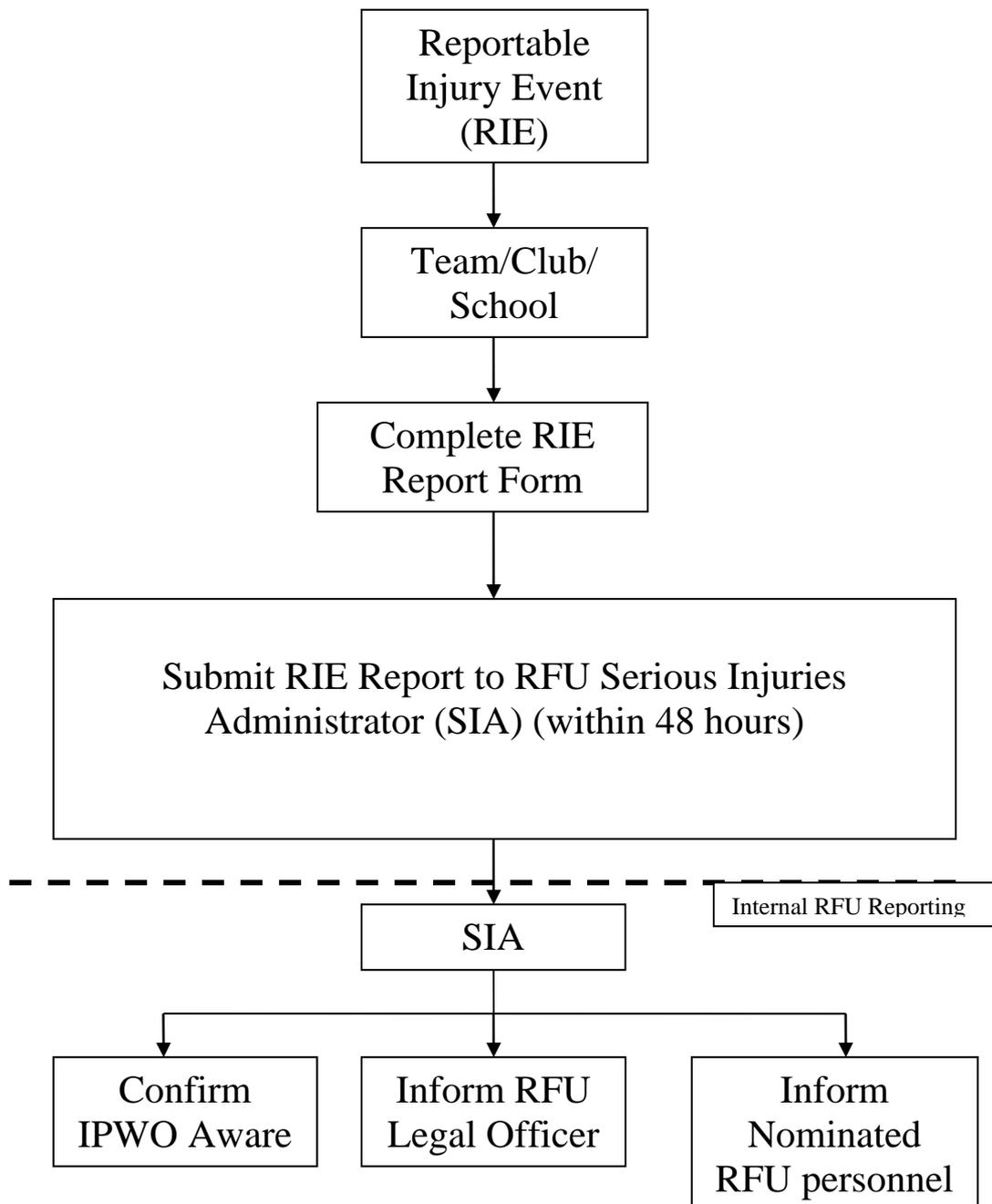
#### Constituent Body Response:

4. Provide support to club, player (s), family and officials, in conjunction with IPWO.
5. In conjunction with RFU Communications Dept and club officials, manage media contact.
6. Assist club/player with any fund raising activities as required.

#### RFU Response:

1. Provide welfare support to the player(s), and club through the IPWO.
2. Monitor the status of the injured player.
3. Maintain and analyse the Reportable Injury Event Database.
4. Enter player into the Catastrophic Injury Surveillance Programme as appropriate.

**RFU Game Wide Reportable Injury Event – Reporting Process and Reportable Injury Event Form**



## RFU REPORTABLE INJURY EVENT REPORT

Please use this form to report any injuries that occur whilst playing rugby or taking part in organised rugby squad training sessions that fit any of the following definitions:

1. **An individual who sustains an injury which results in their being admitted to a hospital. This does not include those taken to an Accident or Emergency Department and allowed home from there.**
2. **Deaths occurring during or within 6 hours of the game finishing.**

---

Date of report: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of report: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of injury: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of injury: \_\_\_\_\_

Player's name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB or Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Club/School: \_\_\_\_\_ Team: \_\_\_\_\_

Game:  Training:   
Grass Pitch:  Artificial Grass Pitch:  Other Surface:

Nature of suspected injury: \_\_\_\_\_

Category:

1. An injury which results in admission to a hospital.  
 2. A death which occurred during or within 6 hours of a game finishing.

---

### Game Injuries Only

Opposition Club: \_\_\_\_\_ Team: \_\_\_\_\_

Venue: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Referee: \_\_\_\_\_

---

### Injured Player Contact Details:

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Next of Kin: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Name of reporting person: \_\_\_\_\_

Position within Club/School: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Telephone Numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Once completed, please send this form to the RFU Sports Injuries Administrator:  
Email: [sportsinjuriesadmin@therfu.com](mailto:sportsinjuriesadmin@therfu.com) Fax: 020 8892 4446 Tel: 0800 298 0102  
Post: Sports Injuries Administrator, Rugby Football Union, Rugby House, 200 Whitton Rd,  
Twickenham, TW2 7BA.

## Club Serious Injury Emergency Procedures Protocol

### DUTY MANAGER TASKS

- Initial management of the response :
  - Ensure medical staff/first aider is attending injured person and has sufficient assistance.
  - Ensure an ambulance is or has been called if appropriate (if in doubt telephone emergency services) and provide details of the injury and the location of the incident:

**Name of Person Reporting:**

**Telephone Number:**

**Exact Location:**

**Club Name:**

**Address:**

**Postcode:**

**Injury Details:**

**Ambulance Access Point:**

**Any hazards:** (power lines, fog)

- Ensure a responsible person is positioned to meet the ambulance at the Emergency Access Point to guide it to the incident.
  - Ensure the ambulance access route or air ambulance landing site is clear of obstructions. If ambulance access on to the pitch is required, ensure all training and matches in the vicinity are stopped.
  - Ensure next of kin are informed if appropriate
- Initial information management relating to the incident i.e.:
    - Ensure appropriate details (including contact details) are recorded of all persons involved in the incident i.e. players, coaches, referee, line judges, first aid/medical personnel, witnesses.
    - Inform club officials of the incident.

### NOMINATED CLUB OFFICIAL TASKS

- Formal reporting of the Reportable Injury Event to the RFU:
  - **Tel: 0800 298 0102**
  - **Fax: 020 8892 4446**
  - **Email: [sportsinjuriesadmin@therfu.com](mailto:sportsinjuriesadmin@therfu.com)**
- Notify the Constituent Body:
  - **Tel**
- Notify the Clubs' insurers:
  - **Tel:**
  - **Fax:**

## **TEAM COACH OR MANAGER**

Some key points for the squad manager and/or coach to remember in the event of a serious injury:

- **DO NOT** move the casualty (unless in immediate danger).
- Keep calm, reassure casualty and keep them warm.
- Summon the first-aider to scene.
- Remain with the casualty until first-aider arrives
- Move other players away from scene and ensure they are supervised and protected from the weather.
- Arrange for next of kin to be notified if not present

## **FIRST AIDER/MEDICAL TASKS**

- Provide appropriate safe and optimal on-field care
- Summon appropriate assistance. The Emergency Medical Services should be called when:
  - The player is unconscious
  - A suspected head or spinal injury
  - A suspected fracture or serious dislocation
  - Suspected internal injuries
  - Suspected serious medical problems e.g. heart attack, heat stroke, diabetic emergency, allergic reaction etc..
  - The player's condition deteriorates
  - You feel unable to handle the situation
- Hand over care to the NHS paramedics on their arrival
- Maintaining appropriate records of treatment given.

## Referee Society injury report form

<b>Home Team</b>	
<b>Name of Home Team Captain</b>	<b>Name of Home Team Coach</b>
<b>Away Team</b>	
<b>Name of Away Team Captain</b>	<b>Name of Away Team Coach</b>
<b>Date of Match</b>	
<b>Level of Match</b>	
<b>Factual Summary of Incident</b> (please use your “own words” and do not include speculation or guesswork)	
<b>Touch Judges’ Names (if applicable)</b>	
<b>Name(s)/Contact Details of Medical Staff Attending</b>	
<b>Name(s)/Contact Details of Spectators who Witnessed the Incident</b>	
<b>Referee’s Name</b>	
<b>Date</b>	
Please submit one copy of the completed report to your Referees Society Secretary and one to the RFU Referee Manager at <a href="mailto:MichaelPatz@rfu.com">MichaelPatz@rfu.com</a> or to Rugby House, 200 Whitton Road, Twickenham TW2 7BA	