

COLLABORATION BETWEEN SAFEGUARDING AND DISCIPLINE

It is often difficult to determine when dealing with a particular incident in rugby whether it is a disciplinary issue, a safeguarding issue, both or neither. To determine how to deal effectively with such an issue, it is important to know and understand the difference between the aims and objectives of discipline and safeguarding in the game .

The RFU Safeguarding Children and Safeguarding Adults policies set out key principles, as well as providing best practice guidance. Everyone shares the responsibility for safeguarding and, therefore, this guidance is both relevant and useful for all involved in creating safe environments in the game, whether as a parent, coach, spectator or volunteer.

The below guidance takes mandatory expectations from the RFU Safeguarding Policy, and supplements this with additional information that clubs might find useful.

SAFEGUARDING

A child is defined as anyone under the age of 18, regardless of the team they play in or the level they play at. Safeguarding focuses on the prevention of harm and poor practice toward children and promoting their safety and wellbeing in all aspects of the game. To provide children with the best environment, everyone involved behaves within an accepted ethical framework and demonstrates exemplary behaviour.

A safeguarding incident will usually involve interactions between an adult and a child, but there may be situations where one child displays harmful behaviour towards another. Some children may have difficult days, which result in out of character behaviour toward other children, which may have caused harm to another child. If clubs notice patterns in behaviour from certain children, who are showing continuous harmful behaviour towards other children, this may be a safeguarding matter, as this pattern of behaviour may be indicative of abuse towards the child. Incidents which only involve children should normally be dealt with as disciplinary matters, following age-appropriate principles. If there is an incident between two adults in the presence of a child, this may also be a safeguarding matter and will depend on the facts of the case, as well as the impact the incident has on the child.

To decide if the incident is a safeguarding matter, the individual should ask:

- Has the RFU Safeguarding Policy been breached
- Is the conduct or behaviour of the individual/s poor practice
- What is the impact on the child/ren and their wellbeing? Has the child/ren's wellbeing been impacted or have they suffered harm

If the answer to any of the above is yes, then the matter is a safeguarding one and a discussion should take place with the RFU Safeguarding Team, the Club Safeguarding Officer and/or the CB Safeguarding Manager without delay.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline is one of the core values of rugby union. The RFU's disciplinary regime reflects World Rugby Regulation 17 (Discipline – Foul Play). On-field, it exists to penalise players whose foul play or misconduct is other than accidental. Off-field, it exists to protect everyone from any conduct which is prejudicial to the game or the Union.

To decide if the incident is a discipline matter, the individual should ask:

- Has there been on-field foul play (contrary to World Rugby Law 9)
- Is the alleged conduct prejudicial to the interests of the game or the Union (contrary to RFU Rule 5.12)

If the answer to either question is yes, then the matter is a disciplinary one and a discussion should take place with the RFU Discipline Team, the Club Disciplinary Officer and/or the CB Disciplinary secretary.

DISCIPLINE, SAFEGUARDING OR BOTH?

There may often be no distinct demarcation lines between discipline and safeguarding, and some incidents raise both issues and will therefore require careful management and communication between both the Club Safeguarding Officer and the Club Discipline Officer.

The following trigger points should assist when deciding when to refer a matter to both the Discipline and Safeguarding teams:

- Serious injury
- Police investigation
- Racial abuse - verbal or physical
- Abuse of a young match official - verbal or physical
- Breach of RFU regulation 15 that has caused harm to a child

Reason (not limited to) for referral to the RFU for the above matters

- Support for the children to provide evidence at a hearing
- Possible referral to children's services or other agencies for support or intervention
- RFU liaison with police
- Any of the above committed by a person who holds a position of trust within the sport, e.g. coach or first aider
- If it is identified that a parent or spectator has committed the above, is in a position of trust outside of rugby (e.g. a teacher), or in a volunteer role with children (e.g. a scout leader or other sports coach)

Reason (not limited to) for referral to the RFU for the above matters

- Referral to Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) as per statutory guidance

The key principle to be considered by all individuals when determining what type of incident has occurred should be "If in doubt, notify the RFU and ask for advice." The RFU encourage all Discipline Secretaries, Club Safeguarding Officers and CB Discipline/Safeguarding Managers to communicate with each other and discuss how best to manage the referral to the RFU. It is important to note that this must not cause a delay in making RFU Safeguarding or RFU Discipline aware.

The RFU Safeguarding Team can be contacted via safeguarding@rfu.com.

The RFU Discipline Team can be contacted via disciplinerfu@rfu.com.

CONTACT US

SAFEGUARDING@RFU.COM

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

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