

# **COLCHESTER RFC**



## **Safeguarding Overview**

### **The Context**

Over the last week, a number of very high profile cases have been highlighted in the media where professional footballers have disclosed that as junior players, they were abused by coaches and volunteers. These coaches were supposed to be there to coach, support and nurture them. I suspect that the Government, in association with the Football Association and other Governing Bodies, will soon launch a full enquiry into safeguarding young people engaged in sport.

At this point in time, I think it would be beneficial to brief all parents and families at Colchester Rugby Club on the strategies and practices we employ in order to keep your children safe in sport.

As parents and club members, please be assured that in terms of safeguarding children, Colchester Rugby Club takes it's responsibilities very seriously.

### **Volunteers and their Safeguarding Responsibilities**

At a matter of course, coaches that are engaged in regulated coaching (weekly, with the same group of children) are subject to a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. This includes checks with the local Police Force as well as the Police National Computer.

At Colchester we encourage volunteers to gain formal qualifications in both rugby and working with children. In the last two years a significant proportion of our volunteers have willingly undertaken the RFU 'Play it Safe' safeguarding course. This is a course that highlights good safeguarding practice.

### **What is Safeguarding? What is Child Protection?**

Safeguarding is the policies and procedures we as a club employ in order to protect our children and keep them safe. Child Protection is essentially the *reactive* procedures we employ when something goes wrong. I am pleased to say that the vast majority of my work as Club Safeguarding Officer focuses on being proactive and putting measures in place to ensure that our work is as safe as it can possibly be.

### **The Colchester Safeguarding Team**

We are very fortunate at Colchester to have a Safeguarding Team: Sally Fester, Lynn Wright and Catherine Miller. All three members of the team are qualified, DBS checked and experienced in the systems and processes in place at Colchester Rugby Club. Their primary role is to carry out DBS checks for volunteers, but they can also offer advice and support to parents, children and fellow volunteers.

As Safeguarding Officer I assist with the induction of new coaches and volunteers, often simply by providing them with a mentor within their age group who has both the experience and the skills to help them develop as a coach/volunteer. Coaches and volunteers often come to me for help and advice in order to help and/or support a family or a player who is

experiencing difficulties. I have a monitoring role where in conjunction with senior officials, I observe and monitor our practice to make sure it is both effective and safe. Finally, I also help deal with concerns or complaints that sometimes arise from rugby; I can represent the club or a player (particularly junior players) in the disciplinary process to make sure that their views are represented, or investigate specific complaints or allegations.

The role of Safeguarding Officer is mandatory; every club must have one, and the RFU has been at the cutting edge of Safeguarding children in sport for many years. A point I must highlight is that the RFU was the first sporting organisation to achieve the NSPCC 'Gold Standard' for Safeguarding - the vast majority of other sports took a number of years to catch up with the RFU and there are still some major sporting organisations who have not achieved this standard.

### **Concussion – Keeping Players Safe**

Finally, I would like to highlight one of the biggest issues facing junior rugby at this moment in time - concussion awareness. Medical and Sporting professionals have put a great deal of research into the issue of head injuries and concussion in sport, and again, the RFU have been at the forefront of best practice. The RFU have produced an online Concussion Awareness Course known as 'Headcase'. I would strongly urge ALL parents who have child playing rugby to take this online course - it takes about 30 minutes but in the event of your child sustaining a head injury it will help you manage their care and recovery. We ask ALL our coaches to take this course. I have included the link to the course (this version is aimed at Parents and Teachers):

<http://www.englandrugbyfiles.com/concussion/courses/teachers/>

### **The Safeguarding Golden Rule – Share Concerns**

The Golden Rule of safeguarding is simple - if something concerns you, or you feel something is not quite right, please share it with someone who can make a difference (The Safeguarding Team, Coach, Parent Rep, Manager or Club Official). If more people shared their concerns earlier, children throughout society would be more effectively protected. You are not interfering or intrusive, you are just being careful. We are here to listen.

### **Confidentiality**

The Safeguarding Team work confidentially. However, the only time we cannot guarantee confidentiality is if we receive information that, if not shared, could lead to a child or young person being put at risk of harm – in these cases we have a duty to use this information in order to protect any potential victim.

Finally, with particular reference to the Mini Section, please ensure that there is someone 'on site' and available to care for your children at all times. We are well aware that you may have multiple children in different age groups, but remember that from Under 6 to Under 12 there must be a responsible person to take care of them – you cannot drop and go.

With reference to Safeguarding and club procedures there are other documents you may wish to look at, these include:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Code of Conduct for: Players, Match Officials, Parents, Coaches and Spectators.

Thanks for reading; if you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me.

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