



PLAY YOUR PART. LET ME PLAY.

Bullying

The culture of bullying

It is the responsibility of the club to deal with bullying that may take place. Each club should display the IRFU anti-bullying statement that should be known to all members involved with Age-Grade Players. All coaches and volunteers in the club should implement it in line with relevant IRFU codes of conduct. Incidents must be dealt with as they arise to demonstrate that such behaviour will not be tolerated.

Bullying will continue in a culture that assumes name-calling, exclusion, teasing and other similar behaviours are acceptable, part of 'growing up' or a 'man-up' approach. This is never a pleasurable experience and is especially unwelcome for young people who may not have developed the emotional maturity to put the behaviour in context or have the tools to cope with it. Young people are often embarrassed to share their concerns with others and often need adults to be their voice in such circumstance.

Bullying is defined by the Department of Education and Skills guidelines as unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time

Types of bullying (this list is non-exhaustive and serves only as a guide):

- Name-calling
- Spreading harmful rumours about others.
- Exclusion from activities
- Intentionally isolating another person from conversation or during activity
- Threatening or intimidating behaviour
- Taking or damaging property or belongings
- Physical assault or causing physical harm
- Making a person do things they don't want to
- Threatening or abusive messaging (text, **social media**, email)

Can occur between:

Child to child - physical aggression, verbal bullying, intimidation, damage to property and isolation

Adult to child - includes the repeated use of gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidatory nature or any comment intended to degrade the child

Child to adult - includes the use of repeated gestures or expressions of threatening or intimidatory nature by an individual child or group of children.



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Clubs should strive to provide a place where:

- Name calling will not be tolerated
- No one suffers abuse of any nature
- No one is victimised
- Each member is supported and listened to
- All members are treated equally
- Solutions to problems are the concern of all.

Preventing bullying

- Having a proactive approach can prevent bullying from occurring within the club
- Be committed to ensure the safety and security of all players – good supervision numbers make it hard for bullying behavior to go unnoticed
- Encourage an awareness of what bullying is and how to avoid it. Have the anti-bullying statement visible within the club and ensure the Club Welfare Officer, coaches and other volunteers remind players and coaches of their Codes of Conduct
- Establish Codes of Conduct - Encourage young people to contribute to the rules about behavior, and reinforce anti-bullying messages by adults leading by example in their behavior
- Encourage a '**permission to share**' culture that allows Age-Grade Players to raise their concerns
- Encourage a mature and measured attitude towards bullying so that Age-Grade players know how to respond effectively. **Bullying should always be considered in conjunction with the Codes of Conduct. Poor practice should always be tackled early, warnings should be given and in the case of Age-Grade Players especially, there should be an opportunity to adjust their behaviour**
- Encourage the group to come forward with any future concerns – this will reinforce the message that bullying in whatever form is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. Persistent poor practice may escalate into severe bullying if allowed to go unchecked.



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Responding to Bullying

- When bullying arises within a group situation use the 'no-blame' approach
- Assure the victim that nothing is wrong with them and it is not their fault
- Talk with the person alleged to be bullying another person, explain the situation, and try to get the "bully(ies)" to understand the consequences of their behaviour
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behavior by asking open questions for example;
 - Tell me what happened?
 - What were you thinking that led you to behave that way?
 - Who has been affected by what you have done?
 - Can you tell me how that person has been affected by your behavior?
 - What do you think you need to do to make things right?
- Seek an apology to the victim(s)
- Inform parents and where necessary inform coaches or volunteers working the group
- Impose sanctions as necessary.

For further assistance in dealing with incidents you can use the ISPCC reporting tool where necessary, <https://www.ispcc.ie/index.php/ispcc-support-line>

More extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and are reportable to Statutory Authorities

Further Assistance

Clubs who wish to achieve the highest standards for combatting bullying can set themselves the task of participating in the ISPCC 'Shield' campaign.

<https://www.ispcc.ie/shield-anti-bullying-programme>

The IRFU have begun work with the ISPCC to develop a tool for all clubs. This will be an entry level standard for achieving the 'Shield' that will be useful in implementing Safeguarding standards, <https://www.irishrugby.ie/video/irish-rugby-tv-irfu-backs-ispccshield-anti-bullying-campaign/>

For clubs that are currently dealing with bullying issues the following link may provide some useful anti-bullying activities,

<https://thecpsu.org.uk/resource-library/2014/anti-bullying-activities/>

For more information on Bullying see page 61-62 of Sport Ireland's Code of Ethics *here*