



# Scottish Rugby

## Disciplinary Guide in respect of Age Grade Disciplinary Procedures

---

LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT ACHIEVEMENT ENJOYMENT RESPECT



## Foreword

Scottish Rugby's policies and regulations are designed to ensure that all those involved in our game – whether as a player, coach, match official or otherwise – understand that whilst rugby is a game of controlled physical endeavour, it must be played in accordance with both the *Laws of the Game* and Scottish Rugby's *Core Values*.

Those involved in Age Grade rugby have a special role to play in this regard. In developing young players, they need to ensure that the game's high standards of conduct, both on and off the field, are passed on to the next generation. In dealing with Age Grade players, Scottish Rugby therefore urges that a 'child-focussed' approach be adopted – one which deals with young players in an appropriate, fair and proportionate manner, and one which supports their learning of the game and its values. This Disciplinary Guide forms part of that process.

The Guide has been designed to assist all those involved better understand how disciplinary matters involving Age Grade players should be dealt with and, in particular, how the processes applied to the adult game may be amended to reflect the age of the individual. This is done by putting the player at the centre of the process, and ensuring that their voice is listened to and they are respected throughout.

Whatever your role in the game, we would recommend that you read and be aware of the contents of this, Scottish Rugby's *Disciplinary Guide to Age Grade Disciplinary Procedures*.

# Scottish Rugby Core Values

Scottish Rugby is the Governing Body of Rugby Union in Scotland and promotes these core values from our National Teams through to grassroots rugby.

Our core values are:

**LEADERSHIP**

**ENGAGEMENT**

**ACHIEVEMENT**

**ENJOYMENT**

**RESPECT**

To help promote these values Scottish Rugby has a ***Code of Conduct for the Game***. The Code of Conduct can be found on the Discipline section of the Scottish Rugby website.

## BEST PRACTICE

**BELOW ARE SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MAY ARISE WHEN DEALING WITH THE AGE GRADE DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES. AS SUCH, THEY APPLY TO CLUBS, SCHOOLS AND OUR AGE GRADE REPRESENTATIVE PROGRAMMES.**

### 1. The Process

Where appropriate, the Age Grade disciplinary process should be conducted more informally than the equivalent adult process (and the procedures adopted should be simple and easy to understand). Those closest to the young player will often be best placed to mentor, guide and discipline the player.

Where possible, there should be minimal delay before any disciplinary process takes place.

### 2. Provisional Suspension

Any player ordered from the field of play (including any Age Grade player) becomes immediately suspended on a provisional basis. They are unable to take part in any further match until their disciplinary case has been concluded.

Disciplinary matters should be dealt with as promptly as reasonably possible, particularly if the player indicates their intention to plead not guilty. This prevents the player, if found not guilty, from serving a period of suspension that need not have been served.

Where an Age Grade match is abandoned due to disciplinary reasons, Scottish Rugby's Disciplinary Manager must be informed. Where appropriate, the Discipline Manager may request an Interim Order to provisionally suspend all players (from both teams) whilst a disciplinary investigation is conducted.

### 3. Hearing Arrangements

For Age Grade players subject to a disciplinary case (or acting as a witness to an incident), the welfare of that player should be the primary consideration when making arrangements for any disciplinary hearing. For example, their educational commitments and family life should be carefully considered when deciding when and where any hearing should take place and how the hearing should be managed. Any fact finding or the taking of witness statements should be undertaken in a non-threatening / non-intimidating environment (for example, arranging to meet the young person at their clubhouse or school where they will feel comfortable).

### 4. Sanction

It is very important that the disciplinary process assists in maintaining high standards within the Game. However, any playing suspension imposed on an Age Grade player should not normally be so severe as to discourage the player from continuing to play rugby in the future (subject, of course, to the seriousness of the alleged act).

Any sanction imposed on the player must be based on the Sanctions Table contained within the Disciplinary Rules. However, the player's age, rugby experience and other factors may be taken into account when determining the final sanction. Playing sanctions are imposed in matches/weeks and apply to a combination of club, school and/or representative games.

Where appropriate the sanction imposed may include, in addition to any playing suspension, a non-rugby related element. Financial penalties or costs should not be imposed on Age Grade players.

You can find the Sanction Table in Appendix 2 of Scottish Rugby's Disciplinary Rules.

### 5. Safeguarding

Should any potential Safeguarding concern arise when dealing with an Age Grade player (or witness), advice should immediately be sought from Scottish Rugby's Child Wellbeing and Protection Team.

Under normal circumstance, the name of any Age Grade player and details of their case which might identify that player should not be published. Further assistance on the publication of disciplinary offences may be sought from Scottish Rugby's Discipline Manager.

## **6. Representative Teams**

Disciplinary matters involving players from any Scottish Age Grade representative team shall (subject to any relevant cross-border competition rule) be dealt with by Scottish Rugby's Discipline Committee.

Where an Age Grade Player of a visiting representative team is ordered from the playing enclosure, the Referee shall provide a report to Scottish Rugby's Discipline Manager. The Discipline Manager shall, subject to any relevant cross-border competition rule, refer the matter to the player's Home Union to be dealt with by them.

## **7. Tournaments, Festivals and Competitions**

If a player is ordered-off in a U15 or younger age group tournament, festival or other competition (e.g. Sevens), the matter should be dealt with by the player's Coach (in conjunction with the club or school Child Protection Officer) as soon as possible and, in any event, it must be dealt with before the player's next match. The Age Grade player will be provisionally suspended and unable to take part or be selected for any further match until the matter has been dealt with. For serious incidents, a full hearing may be necessary after the event.

For the avoidance of doubt when applying any sanction from an XVs fixture, one day of any XVs tournament or festival should normally be considered to be equal to one match.

# THE AGE GRADE DISCIPLINE PROCESS IN CLUBS AND SCHOOLS

Scottish Rugby's Disciplinary Rules provide that *'Modified procedures may be adopted in respect of Persons under the age of 18 or who are of reduced capacity, subject always to the supervisory authority of a Disciplinary Committee.'*

Subject always to the ability of Scottish Rugby's Discipline Manager to determine that the full disciplinary process set out in the Disciplinary Rules should be applied in any individual case, the following modified procedures may be adopted within the Scottish club and school game.

## Process at Specific Age Grades

### **U12 / Primary School**

For disciplinary matters involving Primary School players / players U12 or younger, the player's Coach or Team Manager will normally be in the best position to understand the circumstances of the incident and provide the most effective child-centric solution.

Sanctions at this age will often be education focused and clubs and schools are encouraged to include their club CPO / School Safeguarding Lead in their decision-making process. Playing suspensions at this age group should only be used in exceptional circumstances.

Advice and guidance is available from Scottish Rugby's Child Wellbeing and Protection Team and clubs and schools are encouraged to make use of this resource.

### **U13 to U15 / S1 to S3**

At U13-U15 / S1-S3 it is expected that a slightly more formal approach should be adopted in respect of disciplinary matters. The player's Coach / Team Manager should continue to take the lead, but any sanction should be referred to an oversight body (such as a club's Age Grade Committee or the school's Teacher-in-charge of Rugby) for their endorsement.

Playing sanctions should generally reflect the appropriate entry point for the offence as set out on the Sanctions Table (Appendix 2 of the Scottish Rugby Disciplinary Rules), but the length of sanction may be reduced to reflect the age and relative inexperience of the player. Additional non-playing sanctions (to educate the player as to the ethos of the game and Scottish Rugby's Core Values) will often also be appropriate. Clubs should continue to liaise with their CPO in relation to the proposed sanction, particularly where considering any form of playing suspension.

### **U16 / S4**

Offences at U16 / S4 must be reported to the Discipline Manager. The Discipline Manager may choose to permit the club or school to conduct the disciplinary process or may decide that the matter should be referred to a Scottish Rugby Disciplinary Committee.

Where the Discipline Manager chooses to permit a club or school to conduct the initial disciplinary process:

- any playing sanction should reflect the appropriate entry point on the Sanctions Table (but the length of sanction may be reduced to reflect the age and relative inexperience of the player); and
- the sanction proposed by the club or school must referred to an independent Scottish Rugby Discipline Committee for that Committee's endorsement.

### **U17 / U18**

Other than in exceptional circumstances, disciplinary cases involving players in the U17 and U18 Age Grades will be referred to the Scottish Rugby Disciplinary Committee. Players under the age of 18 are specifically allowed (and are encouraged to be) accompanied at any Hearing by one of their parents / guardians or a trusted adult of their choosing (in addition to their formal representative at the Hearing). The Chair of the Discipline Committee will also consider if any further amendment to the Committee's normal processes should be made to reflect the age of the participant.

A player's club / school may make representations (through the Discipline Manager) where (i) they believe 'exceptional circumstances' exist such that the disciplinary process should be conducted other than by the Scottish Rugby Disciplinary Committee or (ii) where they wish the Committee Chair to consider adjustments to the Committee's process.

## PROCEDURAL MATTERS

### Orderings Off

At younger Age Grades, it will often be inappropriate for the referee to show a player a Red Card and order them from the field. When dealing with younger players, referees are encouraged (where possible) to manage the situation through asking the player's Coach to voluntarily withdraw the player from the field when necessary. Coaches, Team Managers and Club Officials (of both clubs/schools) are asked to respect and support any such request.

### Reporting

Where a referee does formally show a player a Red Card, that Card **MUST** be reported to Scottish Rugby in the normal manner **irrespective of the player's age. In addition:**

- Any discriminatory abuse **MUST** be reported direct to Scottish Rugby.
- The abandonment of any match for disciplinary reasons **MUST** be reported direct to Scottish Rugby.

### Hearings

When dealing with cases involving players under the age of 15 (and older players where authority has been delegated by Scottish Rugby), clubs/schools must be mindful that hearings should be dealt with as quickly as reasonably possible. Careful consideration should be given as to how evidence can best be dealt with in order to alleviate the potential for lengthy hearings. Hearings should be conducted as informally as possible. All those involved must remember that an Age Grade disciplinary hearing is not a courtroom nor is it an adult disciplinary tribunal.

The player should normally be accompanied at any hearing by one of their parents/guardians or, with their approval, by another responsible adult.

The player should be told in advance what to expect at the hearing, including but not limited to:

- where and when the hearing will take place;
- who will be present and in what capacity they will be attending;
- their own role at the hearing; and
- where possible, the nature of any questions which might be asked of them.

Those involved must think carefully about any questions they intend ask (or any actions they may wish the young person to re-enact) and actively seek to avoid the possibility of re-traumatising the young person. In particular, they should consider whether there may be a more sensitive way to gather information required, such as taking the young person's statement in private or in advance of the meeting.

All language used should be child friendly and age appropriate. The opportunity for regular breaks should be provided.

The young person, or their spokesperson, must be given the opportunity to fully have their say.

Reasons should always be provided to support any decision making and also the determination and calculation of any sanction imposed.

### Sanctions

Playing sanctions must be set out in terms of a number of weeks/matches. As part of the process the player should be asked if they play for any other team(s), and matches for those teams should be counted towards the expiry date of



the sanction. It should be explained to the player (and their responsible adult) that **the player will not be able to play for any team until the expiry of their sanction.**

In addition to any playing sanction, non-playing sanctions may be imposed (such as loss of privileges for a defined period). As part of any non-playing sanction, **education as to the values and ethos of the game is to be encouraged.**

### **Appeals**

Where the player (or their responsible adult) is unhappy with the outcome of the disciplinary process, they should be provided with an appropriate Appeal mechanism. Often this will be to a club office bearer / member of the school's management team.

The player should normally remain suspended until their Appeal is heard.

### **Further Information**

It's important to acknowledge it could feel daunting for a young person to be involved in a disciplinary process. This is understandable. Remember, all young people involved might need some extra support during this time. This could be encouraging the young person to speak to a trusted adult about how they are feeling or signposting them to external agencies (for example Childline, Samaritans or Breathing Space).

For advice as to how to support a young person before, during and after a disciplinary process, and access to further resources to support young people, please contact Scottish Rugby's Child Wellbeing and Protection Team ([safeguarding@sru.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@sru.org.uk)).

For further information on any of the issues outlined in this guidance document, please contact Scottish Rugby's Discipline Team ([discipline@sru.org.uk](mailto:discipline@sru.org.uk)).