PROTOCOL FOR CONTACT IN RUGBY
TIVERTON RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

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Applies to	Mini, youth, Colts/U18, adult teams involving 17-year-olds, coaches, first aiders

Adults running rugby activities should understand when it may be appropriate to engage in direct physical contact with children, and to have the confidence to know their actions will not be misinterpreted.

Adults should understand that children have a right to say what they are and are not comfortable with and to have those views acknowledged and respected. We recognise that physical contact between adults and children may take place in certain circumstances. This guidance has been drafted to help adults
understand what appropriate physical contact in rugby looks like.

The below guidance takes mandatory expectations from the RFU Safeguarding Policy, adding information will be useful for coaches in practice.

When might physical contact be appropriate?
Adults must ensure that they keep physical contact between themselves and children to a minimum and understand that gratuitous or unnecessary physical contact may make children, and others, feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

Physical contact between adults and children during rugby activity must only take place to:

- Treat an injury or deliver first aid in the event of an emergency, by a qualified first aider
- Prevent harm, an injury, or an accident from occurring
- Comfort a distressed child, or celebrate their success. However, in these circumstances, adults should
use their discretion and common sense. Always gain consent from the child, and where appropriate, their parent/guardian before making physical contact, avoid private or intimate areas and ensure that such contact does not become, or is not observed as, unnecessary or unjustified

Key principles of appropriate physical contact

To ensure that adults carry out appropriate physical contact, they should follow the below principles:

Unless the situation is an emergency, adults making physical contact with children should:
o Encourage the child to voice any concerns they have if any physical contact makes them feel uncomfortable or intimidated
o Act in the best interest of the child, not the adult
o Be culturally sensitive

Physical contact with children should never:
o Involve touching private areas, such as genitals, buttocks, breasts or any other part of the body that might cause distress or embarrassment
o Take place out of sight or earshot of others
o Occur without the permission and understanding of the child
o Be used as a punishment

Some children may need specific assistance due to disability or injury. If this is the case:
o Parents/Carers should be asked to undertake all intimate or personal care tasks for their child – this is not an appropriate role for coaches and others involved in leading activities
o Required assistance should be discussed with the child and their parents before taking part and, where possible, children should be asked about their preferred way of being assisted
o When assisted, lifted, or otherwise manually supported, children should be treated with dignity and respect
o Where clubs have children who need specific assistance due to disability or injury, this will form part of the club's risk assessment, and the club should clearly outline procedures they are going to use to support the child. These procedures should be shared with, and agreed on, with the child's parents/carers.

Further Advice:
While well-intentioned gestures, such as a high-five, a pat on the shoulder or a fist-bump, are a normal part of team sports, it is important to recognise that they can be misinterpreted and can raise questions from other volunteers or parents.

While the RFU does not want to create barriers between coaches and children, we do want to encourage coaches to use their discretion in these cases and ensure their actions, as well as how they are perceived by others, are appropriate and do not constitute inappropriate or unnecessary contact.
Coaches should also consider the 'personal space' and respect children's boundaries. Even if no physical contact is made, the invasion of a child's boundaries can be intimidating and unnerving, so coaches should do all they can to respect this personal space where possible.

All adults should follow these guidelines.
The RFU Coach development team offer coaching education resources that cover physical contact, and we would strongly recommend that coaches familiarise themselves with this material, which can be found on the ‘Keep your boots on’ RFU YouTube channel.

Coaches can learn more about their safeguarding requirements via the ‘Play it Safe’ course and are encouraged to attend safeguarding training.

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact the RFU Safeguarding Team via safeguarding@rfu.com.