Connemara mini/youth grade – Revised September 2024

To be used in conjunction with IRFU Code of Ethics



# Child Protection Statement

***Connemara RFC*** want to make sure that all our youth players are protected and kept safe from harm while they are with our club, our coaches and volunteers.

We do so by:

* Giving parents, players and volunteer’s information about our club and activities.
* Ensuring we will uphold the Ethos of the Game of Rugby.
* Committing ourselves to the policies of the IRFU regarding our players.
* Establishing clear and visible policies to ensure the safety and enjoyment of all our participants.
* Adhering to the IRFU Code of Conduct for players, coaches, parents and spectators.

**The Child Welfare Officer for Connemara RFC is – Leigh Birchmore (086) 4006913**

**Code of Conduct**

All Players, Parent’s, Coaches and Spectators are expected to abide by the Connemara RFC Underage Code of Conduct. Persons who breach this Code of Conduct may face disciplinary action. Continuous breaches by the same person(s) or group(s) may result in expulsion from Connemara RFC Underage Section. Incident report forms will be completed for breaches of this Code of Conduct.

**Please remember that breach of this Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken out against a player, parent, coach or spectator up to and including expulsion from the club.**

# **Code of conduct for players**

• Play for enjoyment and become part of the rugby family.

• Respect the “Game of Rugby” and play within the laws of the Game.

• Accept the referee’s decision and let your captain or coach ask any relevant questions.

• Play with control. Do not lose your temper. Do not use foul language.

• Always do your best and be committed to the game, your team and your club.

• Be a “good sport”. Applaud all good play whether by your team or the opposition.

• Respect your opponent. Treat all players as you would like to be treated. Do not “bully” or take advantage of any player.

• Rugby is a team sport and make sure you co-operate with your coach, team mates and members of your club.

• Remember that the goals of the game are to have fun, improve your skills and feel good.

• At the end of the match thank your opponents and the referee.

• Always remember that you owe a duty of care to your opponents. Tackle hard but fairly, do not intend to hurt your opponent.

• Winning and losing is part of sport: Win with humility – lose with dignity.

• As part of the team it is important that you attend training regularly and listen to your coach and help your team.

• As a team sport it is important to understand that all members are important to the team!

• Remember you are representing your team, club, family and the Game of Rugby

• If you have any difficulties, issues with a coach/teammate/spectator or need help please speak to the clubs Child Welfare Officer Leigh Birchmore, 086-4006913.

# **Code of conduct for parents**

* Remember, young people play rugby for their enjoyment, not only yours.

* Encourage your child always to play by the Laws of the Game.
* Teach young children that honest endeavour is as important as winning, so that the result of each game is accepted without disappointment.
* Help young people to work towards skill improvement and good sportsmanship.
* Set a good example by applauding good play on both sides.
* Never ridicule, humiliate or shout at young players for making a mistake or losing a match.
* Do not place emphasis on winning at all costs.
* Do not force an unwilling child to participate in the playing of rugby. If the child is to play, he/she will do so in good time through your encouragement.
* Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from rugby.
* As a spectator do not use profane language, flippant remarks, or harass referees, coaches or players and visitors from our club or from visiting club/s.
* Support all efforts to remove abusive behaviour and bullying behaviour in all its forms.
* Do not publicly question the referees’ judgement.
* Recognise the value and importance of volunteer referees and coaches.
* Identify and acknowledge the good qualities of the Game of Rugby and uphold these values.
* Remember you and your child’s contribution to the Game of Rugby is very important to the IRFU and be proud of your contribution.
* Understand the value of team sport and the importance there of.
* Parents/guardians should ensure to keep themselves informed of the start and finishing time of training and events.
* Parents should know that they are responsible for the timely dropping off and collection of children to and from training/events/buses. **Coaches should not be expected to be responsible for the supervision of children outside of training/match/travel times.**

# **Code of conduct for coaches**

* Remember that as a coach of an “age grade team” you are to act in “loco parentis” and to that extent your duty of care is more onerous than that of a coach to an adult team.
* Leaders must respect the rights, dignity and worth of every child and must treat everyone equally, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or ability.
* Lead by example - young people need a coach whom they respect.
* Be generous with your praise when it is deserved. Never ridicule or shout at players for making mistakes or losing a match.
* Teach your players that the Laws of the Game are mutual agreements which no one should evade or break.
* Prepare young players for inter-club activities.

* Be reasonable in your demands on the players’ time, energy and enthusiasm.

* Ensure that all players participate in matches.
* Remember that young players play for fun and enjoyment and that skill learning and playing for fun have priority over highly structured competition. **Winning is not the only objective.**
* Develop player and team respect for the ability of opponents, as well as for the judgement of referees and opposing coaches.
* Insist on fair play and disciplined play. Do not tolerate foul play, fighting or foul language. Be prepared to take off an offending player.
* Encourage young players to develop basic skills and sportsmanship. Avoid over specialisation in positional play during their formative years.
* Set realistic goals for the team and individual players and do not push young players into adult-like competitions.
* Create a safe and enjoyable environment in which to train and play.
* Do not over burden younger players with too much information.
* Make a personal commitment to keep yourself informed on sound coaching principles and methods, and on the principles of growth and development of young people.
* Be aware of the effect you have on growing children.
* Never criticise the referee and touch judges during or after a match in front of players or spectators.
* Seek and follow the advice of a doctor in determining when an injured player is ready to play again.
* Ensure that proper equipment and facilities are available at all times.
* Be responsible and ensure you uphold the ethos of the game and the IRFU.
* All adults intending on working with children **MUST** be fully garda vetted and keep up to date with vetting, safe-guarding level 1 and coaching courses before engaging in training or supervising any trips.
* Care must be taken not to expose a child intentionally or unintentionally to embarrassment or disparagement by use of sarcastic or flippant remarks about the child or his/her family.
* Support and uphold the Code of Ethics and all policies regarding Children in Sport.
* **At no stage** should a child face **corporal punishment** during training sessions and/or matches. The use of laps, push-ups or burpees is against the Spirit of Rugby ethos and will not be tolerated at ***Connemara RFC***.

# **Code of conduct for spectators**

* Be on your best behaviour and lead by example. Do not use profane language or harass referees, players, visitors or coaches from our club or from visiting club/s.

* Show respect for your team’s opponents. Without them there would not be a match.
* Condemn the use of violence in all forms at every opportunity.
* Verbal abuse of players or referees cannot be accepted in any shape or form.

**Policy for Use of Photographic/Video Equipment**

***Connemara RFC*** has adopted a policy in relation to the use of images of athletes in any publications, as there have been concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to children and young people, through the use of photographs on sports websites and other publications.

We are committed to adhering to the guidelines within “Our Duty to Care” and “Children First (Dept of Health and Children).

***Connemara RFC*** will:

• Ensure parental/guardian agreement for the use of images/photographs upon registration.

• Encourage the use of group photographs, so as to identify the club rather than the individual.

• The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child.

• Follow Child Protection procedures, by reporting the use of inappropriate images to reduce the risks to athletes.

• Visiting clubs notify Children’s Welfare Officer before using Video/ Photographic Equipment.

* The use of smart glasses within the clubhouse and changing rooms is strictly forbidden. Any person(s) found to be using said devices may face disciplinary action

**Policy on Alcohol**

***Connemara RFC*** have made it clear that under NO circumstances are Under Age Members permitted to drink alcohol on club grounds or premises, while travelling to other clubs or while on tour. We take zero tolerance to underage members of our club wearing our crest to social events where alcohol may be involved, thus jeopardizing the credibility of our good name.

**Anti-Bullying Policy**

**What is bullying?** Bullying exists in many different forms, some are not as obvious as others, but are just as damaging to the victim. Bullying Definition: Bullying is repeated aggression, be it verbal, physical or psychological, by an individual or group against others, which causes significant harm to the victim(s). It is intentional, aggravating and intimidating. Listed below are some of the more common types of bullying, one or more method may be used to bully

**Physical bullying** includes any physical contact that would hurt or injure a person like pushing, hitting, kicking, punching, tripping, etc. Physical bullying can put the victim at risk of injury and makes them feel powerless. Taking something that belongs to someone else and destroying it would also be considered a type of physical bullying.

**Verbal bullying** usually takes the form of name-calling or making nasty remarks or jokes about a person's religion, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or the way they look. It can also include freezing the victim out by exclusion or spreading rumours. Making threats against a person or their property is also a type of bullying. It can be a threat to damage or take something belonging to the victim or to hurt them physically. Often the threat is not actually carried out, but the fear created by the threat can be enough to upset the victim.

**Cyber bullying** is done by sending messages, pictures, or information using electronic media, computers (email & instant messages), mobile phones (online messaging services, text messaging & voicemail) and social networking websites. This activity can be upsetting and harmful to the person targeted. This type of bullying can allow the person who bullies to hide their identity which may have a bigger impact on the victim.

**Homophobic bullying** is motivated by prejudice against a person’s actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity- lesbians, gay males, bisexual, transsexual, or transgender people.

**Racist bullying** is motivated by prejudice against a person’s skin colour, cultural or religious background or ethnic origin.

\*Boys are more likely to physically bully their victims, girls use more indirect methods. Indirect bullying can often go undetected for long periods of time. This can include socially isolating another person, ignoring them, or attempting to make others ignore that person.

Everyone within ***Connemara RFC*** should know that Bullying will not be tolerated.

***Connemara RFC*** will:

• Ensure the safety of all players at all times.

• Support efforts within the community to combat bullying.

• Ensure that all members follow the code of conduct, which promotes the rights and dignity of each member.

• Establish if bullying takes place within the club or area and address the problem in the right manner.

• Be committed to ensure the safety and security of all our participants.

• Never encourage young people to take the law into their own hands if being bullied.

• Assure the victim that there is nothing wrong with them and it’s not their fault.

• Follow procedures for the reporting of bullying.

• Use a whole group policy or ‘no blame approach’, i.e., not ‘the bully’ but working with bullies and the group of young people, helping them to understand the hurt they are causing, and so make the problem a ‘concern’ of the whole group/team.

***Connemara RFC*** strives to:

* Provide a place where name calling will not be tolerated.
* Provide a place where no one suffers abuse of any nature.
* Provide a place where no one is victimized.
* Provide a place where each member is supported and listened to.
* Provide a place where all members are treated equally.
* Provide a place where solutions to problems are the concern of all.
* Filling in incident report form.
* Notify Club Children’s Welfare Officer (Leigh Birchmore 086-4006913)
* Continuous bullying by the same person(s) may lead to disciplinary action and expulsion from the club.

**Support for Age-Grade Players:** The ISPCC’s Childline service has an Online Bullying Support service - a live one-to-one text messaging support service for children and young people affected by bullying.

By texting the word ‘Bully’ to 50101 a young person from anywhere in Ireland can avail of this free confidential service. This service is available from 10am – 4am every day.

Childline provides support via a One-to-One live chat service on the web. Childline's website www.childline.ie also has support pages which contain information about Childline, children’s rights and information on various support topics. These can be accessed by logging on to www.childline.ie. The Childline Phone service also provides a 24 hour listening service for all children up to the age of 18.Young people can access this by calling 1800 666 666.

**Disciplinary, Complaint’s and Appeal’s Procedure**

***Connemara RFC*** has put a complaints procedure in place that allows all members who are dissatisfied to register their complaint in a formal way and put an open process of investigation into action.

• Complaints may be lodged by all members of the club.

• Complaints by members must be received in writing by the Secretary or the Children’s Welfare Officer of the Connemara RFC underage section.

• The Children’s Welfare Officer will report in writing to the Youth Chairperson, all incidences of Bad Practice or breaches of Code of Conduct and Club Policy by anyone involved in Connemara RFC Underage section.

• Coaches and volunteers should report all breaches of the Code of Conduct and Policies to The Children’s Welfare Officer or Youth Chairperson without delay.

• The complaint should outline all relevant details about other parties involved.

• The complaint should be brought to the attention of the Chairperson who will arrange a meeting of the disciplinary committee. This will be arranged within 7 days of the chairperson receiving notification of a complaint.

• The Disciplinary Committee should consist of the Youth Chairperson, Children’s Welfare Officer and ordinary registered members of the club.

• If the complaint involves suspected abuse or a criminal offence the chairperson should disband the disciplinary committee and talk to the Children’s Welfare Officer /Designated Liaison Person. The statutory authorities will then be informed. The statutory authorities being TUSLA and in severe cases An Garda Siochana.

• In circumstances of an incident of misconduct/bad practice the disciplinary committee should;

1. Furnish the individual with details of the complaint/report being made against them.
2. Hear the case of all parties involved.
3. Review any relevant paperwork.
4. Hold any necessary meetings with all parties involved.
5. Decide if a rule or regulation has been infringed.
6. In circumstances where it is established that an incident of misconduct /bad practice has taken place, the disciplinary committee should, in writing, inform the parents of youth member(s), or individual(s) involved, of the sanctions to be imposed, within 14 days of the meeting of the disciplinary committee. All records will be kept confidentially on file by the Club Children’s Welfare Officer.
7. If the person against whom the complaint is being made does not agree with the decision of the disciplinary committee they can appeal the decision to an appeals committee in writing within 10-day period.
8. The appeals committee is convened, whose chairperson should be taken from the executive committee and those who have not been on the original disciplinary committee.
9. The appeals committee should confirm or set aside or change any sanction imposed by the disciplinary committee.
10. If any party is not satisfied with the outcome the matter may be referred to the IRFU.

**Child Protection Policy**

***Connemara RFC*** believes that concern for the general well-being, safety and welfare of all children and young persons under its care is of paramount importance in developing the young players of the future. The club recognises the responsibilities and trust that is placed on it by all players and their families.

***Connemara RFC*** accepts that organisations, which include young people among its members, are vulnerable to the occurrence of child abuse. Child welfare and the protection of young people is always the concern of all adults, irrespective of their role within the organisation.

***Connemara RFC*** will respond to that responsibility by encouraging Best Practice in Child Protection matters and encourage everyone involved in the club to recognise this.

* The protection of the child must be the priority of all members.
* All Coaches/Volunteers must know the clubs policy and procedures, be encouraged to listen to the concerns of players and take their complaints seriously.
* All current and potential Coaches/Volunteers will avail of training around Child Protection (Sport Ireland Safeguarding) as outlined in IRFU Child Protection guidelines.
* Persons wishing to Coach/Volunteer with ***Connemara RFC*** Age Grade Rugby must complete an application form and provide names, addresses and contact numbers for two references.
* References for the Applicant will be contacted to determine suitability.
* ***Connemara RFC*** will emphasise to all members that they have a duty to report to Child Welfare Officer- Leigh Birchmore 086-4006913 any concerns they have over the possible abuse of children. This duty also applies to concerns they might have about a colleague.
* Reporting procedures as outlined in the Irish Sports Council Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sport and the IRFU Code of Ethics will be adhered to.
* All Coaches/Volunteers will read receive the IRFU Code of Ethics for Age Grade Rugby and sign a Declaration of Intent prior to the start of each rugby season which will be kept on file by the Child Welfare Officer.
* The club will provide guidance to anyone who makes a report of suspected abuse.

**Definitions of Child Abuse**

**Neglect:** The neglect of a child or the failure to protect a child from any kind of danger.

**Physical Abuse**: Actual or likely physical injury to a child or failure to prevent injury or suffering to a child.

**Sexual Abuse**: Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child where a person involves a child in any activity that leads to their own or others sexual gratification. This might involve intercourse, touching, exposure of sexual organs, showing of pornographic material or talking in an erotic way.

**Emotional Abuse**: Failure to exhibit care and attention but particularly where a child is threatened, taunted, or shouted at and as a consequence leads to loss of self-esteem and confidence. Similarly, undermining a child by ignoring effort or progress.

Confidentiality will be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in cases of abuse, ill welfare or bad practice. It is important that the rights of both the child and the person about whom the complaint has been made are protected. Reporting procedures as set out in “Children First” and “Our Duty to Care” (Dept. of Health and Children) will be adhered to within ***Connemara RFC.***

**Supervision**

***Connemara RFC*** is committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of all its youth members and to provide training and activities in a well supervised, friendly and safe environment.

***Connemara RFC*** will ensure that:

• Players are never left unattended while on the pitch.

• Attendance at training sessions will be recorded.

• Adequate numbers of coaches/volunteers are available to supervise all activities.

• Adequate Adult/Player ratios will be in place.

• Coaches will always know where the players are and what they are doing during training times and at matches.

• Players are ensured privacy in changing rooms, showers, and toilets.

• All players will be informed of what behaviour is acceptable and what behaviour is not acceptable.

• Dangerous behaviour is not allowed, at any stage.

• Parents/Guardians are invited to become involved in their child’s club and its activities.

• Parent’s/Guardians are responsible for the dropping off and collecting of children to/from training and for matches.

• Away games are adequately planned and supervised.

• The Club welcomes new applicants for coaching/assisting and has an application process in place as specified in IRFU Code of Ethics.

• Permission forms for away fixtures should be signed by parents and participants, containing emergency contact number.

• All journeys will take place under supervision of club and team managements.

**Overnight/Away Trips**

General supervision guidelines

***Connemara RFC*** will ensure adequate Adult: Child ratios for away trips. Good practice dictates that a leader should try to ensure that more than one adult is present. This will help to ensure the safety of the children as well as protect adults. All adults travelling **MUST** be fully garda vetted within the club.

• Adult:Child ratios will depend on the nature of the activity, the age of the participants and any special needs of the group, a general guide might be 1:8 for under 12 years of age and 1:10 for over 12 years of age. There should be at least one adult of each gender with mixed parties

• Away trips will need higher rates of supervision, and these should be checked out with the governing body or organiser, children and young people should be supervised at all times.

• Avoid adults being left alone with young participants, if a leader needs to talk separately to a participant this should be done in an open environment, in view of others.

• Respect the privacy of young people while changing, leaders may only need to enter changing rooms where the participants are very young or require special assistance. When necessary, leaders should supervise in pairs or seek assistance, it is the safety and welfare of the participants that is of paramount importance.

• Leaders should not be left alone with young people at the end of a training session. Clearly state times for start and finish of training and/or competitions. If late collections occur leaders should remain in pairs until participants have left. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to make adequate arrangements for collection of young people, it should be made clear that the club is responsible for only club activities

• If a child suffers an injury or accident the parents/guardians should be informed. (Make sure to complete ***Connemara RFC*** Incident/Accident form for ALL incidents/accidents).

# Procedures for Overnight Stay’s/Away Trips/Tours

• Written permission of parents/guardians should be obtained for all overnight/away trips/tours, this should include permission to travel, behaviour agreement and any medical/special needs of the group, (including permission to treat the participant)

• The agreement should be signed by both parents (if applicable) and participants.

• A meeting with parents and participants is useful to communicate travel times, competition details, other activities, gear requirements, special needs, medical or dietary needs, any other necessary details, contact details, codes of conduct, etc. (All players, their coach and club volunteers should attend a meeting in relation to travel arrangements, supervision on the trip, understanding code of conduct and signing up to it well in advance of final arrangements being made)

• The governing body (IRFU) should share any appropriate information with leaders of the group

• All adults who travel on away trips should be carefully chosen, using the recruitment and selection procedure of ***Connemara RFC*** Underage Section

• The roles and responsibilities of adults participating in away trips should be clearly defined

• The Club should appoint a Team Manager/Head of Delegation for away trips. S/he should have overall responsibility for the children's well-being, behaviour and sleeping arrangements. S/he should be appointed as an official of the club for the duration of the trip.

• The Team Manager/Head of Delegation should submit a written report to the Club Executive Committee as soon as possible after the end of the trip.

• On away trips, Coaches and Volunteers should be accountable to the Youth Chairman & Child Welfare Officer in all non-performance related matters (poor behaviour, breaking the agreed rules, breach of Code, or Bad Practice)

• Where there are mixed teams there should be leaders of both genders (at least one female and/or male in the management/coaching structure)

• Adults should not share a room with a child. Where the presence of an adult is needed there should be more than one child in the room with the adult. If children are sharing a room, it should be with those of the same groupings, age, and gender.

• Managers/organisers should check out the venue beforehand, so that separate and appropriate sleeping arrangements can be made in advance.

• Alcoholic drink, smoking and other illegal substances/activities are forbidden to participants. Leaders should act as role models in this respect.

**Recruitment and Selection**

***Connemara RFC*** have a recruitment and selection policy in place in accordance with the IRFU Child Protection Guidelines. All coaches/volunteers are expected to sign up to Code of Conduct and policies and procedures annually, prior to the start of each rugby season. ***Connemara RFC*** strives to establish a process which safeguards the club, and enables the club to recruit suitable volunteers, both male and female. All coaches & volunteers must complete a Garda Vetting form, enrol in the IRFU or Sport Ireland Safeguarding level 1 course, and when applicable to leading an age grade group a certificate in basic first aid will also be required.

**Safety Practices**

***Connemara RFC*** will take all reasonable steps to establish a safe working environment for all its Youth players. The way work is done will be in keeping with regular and approved practice within the game.

• Ensure activities are suitable for age and stage of development of participants

• Put in place a registration system where all participants are registered members before availing of training within the club. See rugbyconnect.ie.

• Advise parent(s) of policies within the club and make these policies available and visible to all parents of youth members.

• Keep a record of any specific medical conditions of the participants

• Keep a record of emergency contact numbers for parents/guardians

• Ensure any necessary protective gear is used.

• Ensure First Aid kit is close at hand with access to qualified first-aider.

• Know the contact numbers of emergency services.

Clifden Medical Practice – (095)-21224 Dr Mark O’Malley (095)-21141 Emergency Services 911

• Keep first aid kit stocked up and check expiry dates regularly.

• Ensure easy access to medical personnel if needed and have an emergency plan

• If an incident occurs, make a brief record of injury and action taken. Make a brief record of the problem/action/outcome. Contact the participant’s parents and keep them informed of all details.

• Incident report forms to be used for all incidents and accidents

• Officials – umpires, referees, etc. – should ensure the conduct of the game.

• Participants should know and keep the rules of their sport, keeping in mind that many rules are there for safety.

• Sports Leaders and player(s) will work and play within the rules of the game and the IRFU.

• Leaders should hold appropriate qualifications required by the governing body.

• Ensure there is adequate insurance cover for all activities.

• Ensure parents/guardians are informed and aware of start and finishing time of events.

• Parents will be made aware that they are responsible for dropping off and collection of children. Coaches should not be expected to be responsible for the supervision of children outside of training/match/travel times.

**Discipline in Children’s Sport**

Discipline in sport should always be positive in focus, providing the structure and rules that allow participants to learn to set their own goals and strive for them. It should encourage young people to become more responsible for themselves and therefore more independent. Children should be helped to become responsible about the decisions and choices they make within sport, particularly when they are likely to make a difference between playing fairly and unfairly.

There should be no place for fighting, over-aggressive or dangerous behaviour in sport.

**The Use of Sanctions**

The use of sanctions is an important element in the maintenance of discipline. The age and developmental stage of the child should be taken into consideration when using sanctions. Sanctions should be fair and consistent and in the case of persistent offence, should be progressively applied. They should never be used to retaliate or to make a Sports Leader feel better.

The following steps are suggested and should always be used in conjunction with the code of conduct for young people:

• Rules should be stated clearly and agreed.

• A warning should be given if a rule is broken.

• A sanction (for example, use of time out) should be applied if a rule is broken for a second time.

• If a rule is broken for the third time the child should be spoken to, and if necessary, the parents/guardians may be involved.

• Sanctions should not be applied if a Sports Leader is not comfortable with them. If an appropriate action cannot be devised right away, the child should be told that the matter will be dealt with later, at a specified time and as soon as possible.

• A child should not be sanctioned for making errors when s/he is playing.

• Physical activity/corporal punishments (e.g., running laps or doing push-ups, etc) **should not** be used as a sanction. To do so only causes a child to resent physical activity, something that s/he should learn to enjoy throughout his/her life.

• Sanctions should be used sparingly. Constant sanctioning and criticism can cause a child to turn away from sport.

• Once sanctions have been imposed, it is important to make the young person feel s/he is a valued member of the group again.

• Where relevant some sanctions may need to be recorded and parents informed.