



England  
Rugby

# EARLY YEARS PROVISION GUIDANCE

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## INTRODUCTION

**Physical activity and play during Early Years are vital to children's development. We want all children and their families to enjoy taking part in Early Year's activities in a way that is as safe and inclusive as possible.**

**We want to introduce them to the RFU Core Values that will help them throughout life. The Core Values of Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline and Sportsmanship, are important both for children in rugby and all the adults they meet, who we hope will serve as role models providing positive experiences.**

This Early Years Provision Guidance shares good practice to approach the development of children between the ages of 18 months to 5 years. We want to help coaches to recognise their responsibilities so that they can put into place safe, stage appropriate and progressive activities. Through their understanding of what is required during Early Years, coaches are more likely to meet the needs and wants of the children they coach. Wherever the activity takes place - clubs, schools or in communities - we want children to have a positive, fun experience.

By creating a positive environment, coaches inspire children to develop lifelong enjoyment of physical activity and the game of rugby union.

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**CHILDREN OF PRE-SCHOOL AGE WHO ARE CAPABLE OF WALKING UNAIDED SHOULD BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE DAILY FOR AT LEAST 180 MINUTES (3 HOURS), SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE DAY. THIS IS THE ADVICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER.**

**THE BENEFITS OF BEING ACTIVE FOR AT LEAST 180 MINUTES EACH DAY ARE:**

- **IMPROVES CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH**
- **CONTRIBUTES TO A HEALTHY WEIGHT**
- **IMPROVES BONE HEALTH**
- **SUPPORTS LEARNING OF SOCIAL SKILLS**
- **DEVELOPS MOVEMENT AND CO-ORDINATION**

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Source: Department of Health and Social Care



**PEOPLE**

# 1.0 PEOPLE

## OUR INTENTION

The knowledge, skills and attitudes of the people involved are key factors in creating and maintaining high quality Early Years activity. This section offers some guidance on how you recruit, train, supervise and develop your coaches.

### 1.1 SUITABLE PEOPLE AS DELIVERERS

1. Do all children have their rugby journey supported by coaches who are children focused and have knowledge and understanding of the developmental needs of an Early Year's participant?



GOOD PRACTICE

Coaches are competent and confident in key coaching processes and engaging, enthusing and retaining very young children in multi-skill activities and sessions. They put the welfare, as well as the wants and needs of children first.

### ? ASK YOURSELF

1. Do I have a knowledge and understanding of the development of children aged 18 months to 5 years old?
2. Can I integrate those movement and social skills into fun and engaging activities?
3. Am I qualified and up to date in my coaching skills for this age group?
4. Have I created the right environment for early years children and their parents and carers to feel welcomed, safe and comfortable with their first experiences in and around rugby?
5. Do I engage with parents and carers to create an understanding of what we are trying to achieve regarding early years movement competence and child development?
6. Do I give the children tasks/games/activities that can be completed at home to reinforce movement competence?
7. Do I use younger role models or siblings to engage and retain their interest in activities?
8. Do my sessions still retain the unique and positive values of Rugby Union (Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline, Sportsmanship) but appropriately adapted for the early years?
9. Can I identify child welfare concerns and appropriately deal with them?
10. Does training for Lead Coaches include defined responsibilities around engagement from parents and carers?

## 1.2 QUALIFICATIONS, TRAINING, SKILLS AND SUPPORT

1. How does the provider ensure that all coaches have the relevant qualifications, skills and experience?

### ? ASK YOURSELF

1. Have all coaches successfully completed enhanced criminal records and barred list checks (DBS checks)?
2. Have an appropriate number of coaches in each session completed:
  - › Paediatric First aid training?
  - › RFU Quilter Kids First U7 Tag course?
  - › Early Years Physical Development & Physical Activity?
  - › UK Coaching Fundamental Movement course?
  - › RFU Safeguarding training?
3. Do coaches have ongoing support through effective supervision and continuing personal development? Are coaches offered guidance and/or training in Early Years provision?

### USEFUL INFORMATION AND LINKS

Are you familiar with the RFUs 'Creating Early Years Activities' guide?

Childcare qualifications suitable for practitioners delivering the EYFS can be found at [www.education.gov.uk/eypqd](http://www.education.gov.uk/eypqd)

Youth Sport Trust [Supporting physical development and healthy eating in the early years](#)

UK Coaching: [How to coach the Fundamentals of Movement](#)

[RFU Safeguarding Courses](#)

# PROTECT

## 2.0 PROTECT

### OUR INTENTION

All children are entitled to protection from harm and have the right to take part in sport in a safe, positive and enjoyable environment. The Rugby Football Union is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children in the sport.

### 2.1 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

1. Has the provider created policies and procedures to ensure the safety, wellbeing and safeguarding of children?



#### GOOD PRACTICE

Providers of children's services in rugby should develop, publish and implement their own safeguarding policy which reinforces the RFU Safeguarding Policy while reflecting the unique local circumstances for that provider. The policy should be made accessible to all participants including parents and carers. Policy should include, but not be limited to:

- A Designated Safeguarding Lead for the provider. This could be the Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO) for clubs.
- Information about Safer Recruitment
- Guidance on creating safe environments, training for coaches and best practice
- Clear guidance and information on the signs and indicators of abuse
- What to do when abuse is suspected, or a safeguarding concern is raised

### ? ASK YOURSELF

1. Am I creating a safe environment for the children?
2. Am I providing the best possible experience for each child?
3. Am I operating within an acceptable ethical framework?
4. Do I demonstrate exemplary and appropriate behaviour?
5. Am I making a positive contribution to each child's development and wellbeing?
6. Do I have the skills and knowledge to uphold the above?
7. Where can I access appropriate training?
8. If using a third-party provider, has the club reviewed their safeguarding policy?

## USEFUL INFORMATION AND LINKS

Consult the [RFU Safeguarding Policy](#) to ensure the best outcomes.

[RFU Safeguarding Toolkit](#)

[Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)

[RFU Regulation 21 – Safeguarding](#)

[Child Protection in Sport Unit \(CPSU\)](#)

## 2.2 SUPERVISION

1. How do I ensure parents and carers are present and involved with their own child?



GOOD PRACTICE

Parents and carers must remain on the premises. The extent of engagement by parents and carers should be appropriate to the stage of the child and the child's capabilities during the session.

### ? ASK YOURSELF

1. Do I clearly set out roles and expectations for parents and carers?
  2. Do engage parents and carers in activities so they can support their children physically (e.g. take them to toilet) and emotionally (e.g. recognition of achievement)?
  3. Are parents encouraged to support their child's engagement in activities?
  4. Do I help parents develop their own understanding of the learning so it can be reinforced at home?
2. Do my coaching arrangements (including adult : child ratios) meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety?



GOOD PRACTICE

Providers must ensure that children are adequately supervised and decide how to deploy coaches to ensure children's needs are met.

3. Has the provider ensured that Lead Coaches retain accountability?



GOOD PRACTICE

Where activities are provided by coaches aged 17 or under, the Lead Coach retains overall accountability. This is not transferred to the young person delivering the activity.



## 2.3 INFORMATION & RECORDS

1. Has the provider put systems in place to protect data?



### GOOD PRACTICE

Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) you must put systems in place to ensure any data you collect is securely processed, stored and destroyed. You must issue people whose data you collect, such as parents and carers, employees and volunteers with a privacy notice.

### ? ASK YOURSELF

1. Who have I designated as being responsible for data compliance?
2. How do I securely collect, process, store, and destroy information about...
  - > participation consent?
  - > photographic consent?
  - > emergency contacts?
  - > medical conditions?
  - > special educational needs?
  - > other information?
3. How do I manage internal data transfers?
4. How do I handle subject access requests?
5. How do I handle data breaches?
6. Have all coaches received training in our data protection policy?

## USEFUL INFORMATION AND LINKS

For further information about protecting data consult the [RFU GDPR Toolkit](#)

Affiliated clubs can use the [RFU Game Management System \(GMS\)](#) to help complete a wide range of Rugby administration tasks. Key benefits include registering your participants and streamlining communication.

## 2.4 INSURANCE

1. If the club is providing Early Years activity directly, are we insured?



### GOOD PRACTICE

As long as you're following the guidance provided, RFU affiliated clubs (National League 1 and below) are provided with Public Liability insurance under the normal clubs' insurance policy, as early years provision is a recognised club activity.

2. Does the club need to take any special precautions to be insured?



### GOOD PRACTICE

This guidance covers the areas you should be addressing in order to ensure the activity is delivered safely. If you follow this guidance, the RFU insurance cover will protect you in the event of a claim against the club. If, for any reason, you can't comply with some aspect of the guidance, it may be possible to continue with the activity safely by taking other steps to manage your risk, in which case the insurance cover will still apply.

3. If Early Years activity is being delivered by a third-party provider, does our club need to do anything?



### GOOD PRACTICE

The third-party provider should have their own insurance in place to cover Early Year's activity. You should ask for a copy of their insurance schedule (they'll be used to providing this) which should show that they are covered for the activity they are delivering and that they have a Public Liability policy to a limit of at least £5m. Your club is covered under the RFU insurance policy whilst the activity is taking place at the club, but you should undertake and record a risk assessment to ensure the space you are providing for the session is safe to use.

### ? ASK YOURSELF

1. Have I checked the DBS status of club coaches or the coaches of third party providers?
2. When was the last time I read the latest guidance?
3. Have I checked if providers are aware of local services and access routes? i.e. medical centres, hospitals and ambulance access.

4. Have I reviewed my insurance?



**GOOD PRACTICE**

Providers (be they clubs or third parties) should review their insurance at least annually, and if they make significant changes to their Early Years provision, to ensure that adequate cover is in place.

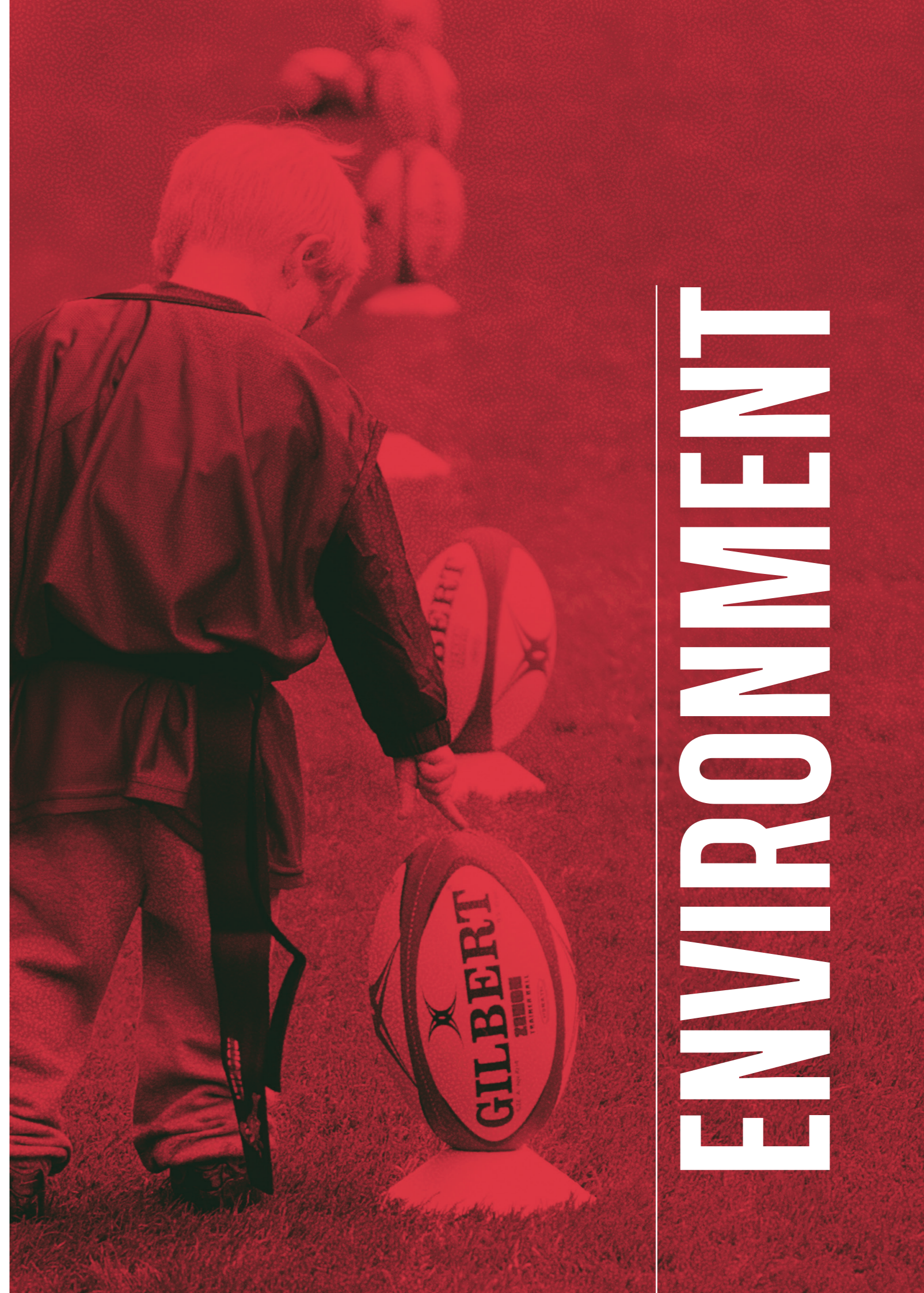
**? ASK YOURSELF**

1. Am I aware of my obligations when advising insurers of incidents?

**USEFUL INFORMATION AND LINKS**

If you have any queries you should contact RFU's insurance brokers on:  
**0121 698 8001**  
**[rfu@howdengroup.com](mailto:rfu@howdengroup.com)**

For further information visit **[www.englandrugby.com/insurance](http://www.englandrugby.com/insurance)**



# ENVIRONMENT



# 3.0 ENVIRONMENT

## OUR INTENTION

The physical and social environment needs to be appropriate for the children, their families and the activities. Activities can be provided in different environments that allow young children to experience the world around them both indoors and outdoors. The environment should be safe, friendly and fun. Positive environments promote the RFU Core Values: Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline, Sportsmanship.

## 3.1 CREATING A WELCOMING CULTURE

1. Have I planned and implemented a programme designed to allow everyone to participate?

### ? ASK YOURSELF

1. Do my policies, procedures and practise promote equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination towards children and adults in the provision?
2. Have I created an environment where everyone feels equally valued and included and no-one is discriminated against?
3. Have I provided children the opportunity to learn to respect and value people who are different to themselves?
4. Have I ensured accessibility for children and adults with disabilities?
5. Have I created a fun and engaging atmosphere relevant to the age group that retains their interest?

## 3.2 BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

1. Do I build a positive relationship with children?

### ? ASK YOURSELF

1. Do coaches encourage children to...
  - › listen to each other as well as well as the coaches?
  - › speak politely to each other?
  - › act kindly to each other?
  - › look after the equipment and resources?
  - › help tidy up all equipment and resources?
2. Do I build a positive relationship with parents and carers?

### ? ASK YOURSELF

1. Are parents and carers encouraged to...
  - › act as positive role models around children?
  - › model the same positive language as the coaches?
  - › support children and coaches as needed?
3. Does the behaviour of coaches contribute to positive relationships?

### ? ASK YOURSELF

1. Do coaches...
  - › model Rugby's Core Values?
  - › ensure that positive behaviour and engagement is recognised during and after sessions?
  - › use positive language to reinforce expectations and outcomes? e.g. Do's not don'ts - "you did well when..."
  - › use an encouraging tone of voice, rather than shouting?
  - › get down to the children's level when speaking with them?
  - › make sure that everyone understands what is expected of them?
  - › stop activities and repeat instructions if needed?
  - › seek support from Lead Coach if experiencing difficulties?
  - › identify any particular difficulties to differentiate and/or change groupings as required?

4. Do I use observation and sharing to promote best practice?

### **? ASK YOURSELF**

1. Do coaches use reflection time after each session to make improvements to their delivery?
2. Do you allow time for coaches to work in different combinations to observe best practice?
3. Do you allow time for coaches to discuss with parents and carers?

## **3.3 MEETING CHILDREN'S NEEDS**

1. Have I been child-centred and captured additional needs and planned adjustments?

### **? ASK YOURSELF**

1. Have I considered how to support each child most appropriately (especially those with 'passports' that describe their needs) including:
  - › any specific method of communication e.g British Sign Language?
  - › their likes and dislikes?
  - › what is likely to create a barrier?
2. Do I seek input and feedback from children and their parents and carers to support best practice and future planning?
3. Do I provide children with additional needs and their families with the appropriate information, help and support?
4. Have I carried out risk assessment for specific physical or medical needs where appropriate? Are all coaches aware of relevant health and safety issues?
5. Do I use equipment with a combination of different colour, texture and sizes? Am I incorporating these across multiple games, not for the sole use of a child with a hearing or visual impairment?
6. Do I use inclusive language and communication that doesn't socially exclude children and that does not have gender or ability bias?
7. Is my delivery inclusive, taking account of children that may have additional needs and/or physical disabilities?

2. Am I adapting my communication and activities for different learners?

### **? ASK YOURSELF**

1. Are all coaches aware that although needs vary, no child should be singled out or made to feel different?
2. Am I using the non-verbal cues and body language of children to judge what is or isn't working, then making adjustments?
3. Am I using appropriate instruction methods for maximum engagement including:
  - › using a child's name to capture their attention?
  - › using a squad name or key word to help focus larger groups?
  - › getting down to their line of sight?
  - › using child friendly language?
  - › being clear and concise?
  - › giving demonstrations?
  - › peer modelling with another child?
  - › working in twos or threes?
  - › using one step instructions until a skill is mastered?

3. Is the progression appropriate?

### **? ASK YOURSELF**

1. Do I start with fun, bite-sized activities?
2. Do I use the child's stage, not age, to indicate the rate of progress?
3. Do I use the child's strengths to help boost confidence?
4. Do I maintain a routine, consistent session structure, and familiar language?
5. Do I plan progression into sessions and remain flexible to re-visit core skills?

## **USEFUL INFORMATION AND LINKS**

Legislation which might help providers of early years rugby includes **Equality Act 2010, Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Children and Families Act 2014.**



## **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) CAN AFFECT A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON'S ABILITY TO LEARN. THEY CAN AFFECT THEIR:**

- **BEHAVIOUR OR ABILITY TO SOCIALISE, FOR EXAMPLE THEY STRUGGLE TO MAKE FRIENDS**
- **READING AND WRITING, FOR EXAMPLE BECAUSE THEY HAVE DYSLEXIA**
- **ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND THINGS**
- **CONCENTRATION LEVELS, FOR EXAMPLE BECAUSE THEY HAVE ADHD**
- **PHYSICAL ABILITY**

Source: gov.uk



## **3.4 SAFETY AND SUITABILITY OF PREMISES, ENVIRONMENT & EQUIPMENT**

1. If the club is providing Early Years activity directly, are we insured?



**GOOD PRACTICE**

Risk assessment involves identifying all hazards, assessing the risk and putting in place measures to control unacceptable risks.

A hazard is anything that has the potential to cause harm. Risk is the likelihood of a hazard causing harm and the degree of harm it could cause.

All providers should undertake risk assessments of the premises, activities and equipment to ensure that they are appropriate for the participants. Risk assessments and control measures should be reviewed before each session. Premises includes buildings, car parks and grounds. Activities should be appropriate for the numbers involved. Facilities and equipment should be appropriate for the activity. Before each session equipment being used should be assessed to ensure that it is appropriate for the age of the participants and in good condition.

### **? ASK YOURSELF**

1. Do I have emergency arrangements?
2. How do I handle and record injuries and near misses?
3. How do I maintain an appropriate level of Paediatric First Aid cover? This may include training and first aid kit(s).
4. Do I have a policy in place to cover adverse weather conditions including how updates are communicated to parents and carers? This may include weather that affects travel as well as indoor or outdoor activities.
5. How do I keep equipment maintained in good order?

3. Do the facilities I use meet the needs of children and their families?

### **? ASK YOURSELF**

1. Have I ensured accessibility for people with disabilities?
2. Are toilet facilities appropriate?
3. Are social spaces appropriate?
4. Have I considered how to maximise the space and facilities available to create high-quality experiences for children?

### **USEFUL INFORMATION AND LINKS**

[RFU Health and Safety information for clubs](#)

[RFU Risk assessment information for clubs](#)



**ACTIVITY**

# 4.0 ACTIVITY

## OUR INTENTION

Activities should be planned to offer learning opportunities for the child in a fun and friendly environment. Personal, Emotional & Social development along with Communication and Language development are as important as Physical development. Parents and carers are expected to be engaged in activities with their child.

## 4.1 PRINCIPLES FOR LEARNING

1. Am I considering the four overarching principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage during my session design and programme planning?



GOOD PRACTICE

The four guiding principles should shape practice in early years settings. They are:

- every child is a unique child
- children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships
- children learn and develop well in enabling environments
- children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates

2. Does my session plan incorporate the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning?



GOOD PRACTICE

Do I consider the different ways that children learn and reflect these when planning activities, they include:

- playing and exploring – children investigate and experience things, and ‘have a go’
- active learning – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- creating and thinking critically – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

3. Do my session plans incorporate the RFU Core Values?



GOOD PRACTICE

Rugby union is a fantastic sport for youngsters, building their confidence and character and introducing them to values that will help them in rugby and throughout life. Do my activities help children understand and show:

- **TEAMWORK** e.g. helping each other, taking turns, working with parents and carers
- **RESPECT** e.g. being kind to each other
- **ENJOYMENT** e.g. having fun
- **DISCIPLINE** e.g. listening to instructions
- **SPORTSMANSHIP** e.g. supporting others, clapping, saying what others did well

4. Am I aware of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) prime areas of learning and how they could be present within my session?



GOOD PRACTICE

Do I help children develop...

- Communication and language: Listening & attention, Understanding and Speaking
- Physical development: Moving & handling and Health & self-care
- Personal, social and emotional development: Self-confidence & self-awareness, Managing feelings & behaviour, and Making relationships



5. Are my activities stage appropriate?



**GOOD PRACTICE**

Children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways. Coaches should plan activities that are appropriate for the stage of the child. Coaches should adapt activities during the session to the capabilities of the child.

### ? ASK YOURSELF

1. Have I referred to Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage to understand age/stage banding, being aware that bands overlap?
2. Have I referred to the guidance on 'What Works to Increase Physical Activity in the Early Years'?
3. Have I considered the duration and timing of my sessions? Sessions should not exceed 1 hour and be divided into activities that maintain children's attention.
4. Am I alert to the mental and physical capabilities of the individual children involved? Am I prepared to adapt/curtail sessions in the event that the children become tired or lose concentration?
5. Am I aware that the children must not take part in contact rugby activities or play contact rugby?

### USEFUL INFORMATION AND LINKS

Department for Education: [Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage](#)

[Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\)](#)

[Early Years Physical Literacy Framework](#)

[Creating Early Years Activity](#)

## WHAT DOES ALL OF THIS LOOK LIKE?

BRING THIS TO LIFE FOR ME...

During a game of Rob the Nest	
<b>Principles</b>	<p><b>Unique child</b> - identify any need for additional support Positive relationships - be supportive of the child's own efforts and independence</p> <p><b>Enabling environments</b> - create rich learning opportunities through play and playful teaching Different ways and at different rates - consider possible progressions and regression for task</p>
<b>Characteristics of Effective Learning</b>	<p><b>Playing and exploring</b> - children willing to 'have a go'</p> <p><b>Active learning</b> - children involved and concentrating</p> <p><b>Creating and thinking critically</b> - children choosing ways to do things</p>
<b>Prime Areas of Learning</b>	<p><b>Communication and language</b> - a child is able to follow your instruction, when asked to collect objects and return to nest</p> <p><b>Physical development</b> - can change direction when returning to their nest</p> <p><b>Personal, social and emotional development</b> - welcomes and values praise for what they have done well during game.</p>
<b>Review</b>	<p><b>Plan</b> - you establish a plan with some cues as to how you could integrate some of the Early Learning Goals, perhaps through questions</p> <p><b>Do</b> - deliver the plan, being adaptable to your observations</p> <p><b>Review</b> - following your delivery you reflect on what when well (linked to your outcomes) and how it could be better next time, using these learnings to influence future plans.</p>

## 4.3 MEETING CHILDREN'S NEEDS

1. Do I promote the importance of nutrition, hydration and physical activity to a healthy lifestyle?

### ? ASK YOURSELF

1. How can I ensure children know the importance of a healthy diet?
2. How can I ensure children know the importance of hydration for good health when being active?
3. Do I role model good practice with regard to hydrating during activities?
4. How am I encouraging and signposting opportunities for continued participation in physical activity (including rugby and other sports) beyond Early Years?



## 5.0 GLOSSARY

<b>Early Years</b>	For purposes of this document Early Years is defined as the age of 18 months to 5 years
<b>EYFS</b>	Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
<b>Provider</b>	For the purpose of this document a Provider is the individual, group or organisation that is providing the Programme, Session and/or Activity. Providers can include, but are not limited to, RFU Affiliated Clubs and third-party organisations
<b>Affiliated Club</b>	A Club which is a member of the RFU
<b>Age Grade Rugby</b>	The structured progression to cover introduction, teaching, playing and coaching of the Game in stages from U7 to U18
<b>Coach</b>	A person appointed by the Provider, whether in employment or on a voluntary basis to deliver the Programme, Session or Activity
<b>Lead Coach</b>	A person appointed by the Provider, whether in employment or on a voluntary basis to oversee the delivery of, and be accountable for, the Programme, Session or Activity by the coaches
<b>Children/Child</b>	A person or persons under the age of 18 years as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and 'Children' people under the age of 18
<b>Parent/Carer</b>	A person aged 18 or over who has parental responsibility for that child
<b>Safeguarding</b>	The action taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility
<b>Harm</b>	Ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development including, for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another as defined by the Children's Act 1989
<b>DBS</b>	Disclosure and Barring Service
<b>Age</b>	The biological age of the child
<b>Stage</b>	The development stage of the child as outlined in the EYFS framework
<b>General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)</b>	The GDPR forms part of the data protection regime in the UK, together with the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018)
<b>Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)</b>	A legal definition referring to children who have learning problems or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children of the same age. Many children will have special needs of some kind at some time during their education
<b>Designated Safeguarding Lead</b>	Person responsible to a person to take lead responsibility for safeguarding. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility
<b>Club Safeguarding Officer</b>	A person appointed by an affiliated club to act as first point of contact for safeguarding concerns
<b>Development Matters</b>	A non-statutory guidance document supporting practitioners in implementing the statutory requirements of the EYFS
<b>Activity</b>	A short, fun, period of play that offers learning opportunities

Session	A number of activities lasting no more than an hour in total
Programme	A number of sessions that progressively help children develop the prime areas of learning
Prime areas of learning	The EYFS defines three prime areas of learning: communication and language; physical development; personal, social and emotional development

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