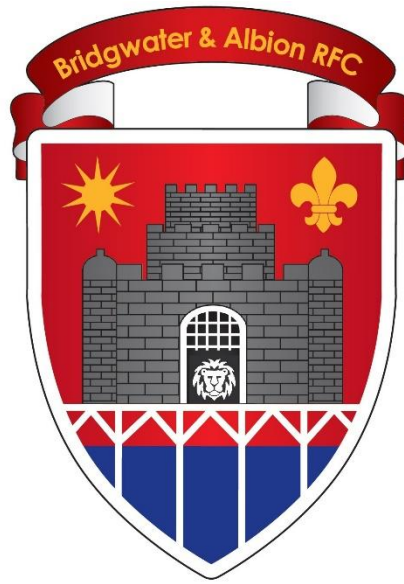




Bridgwater and Albion Rugby Football Club

Club Respectful Behaviour Policy- Season 2026/2027

V1-2026

Policy adopted October 2026. Signed on behalf of Bridgwater & Albion RFC:

Stephen Smith
Club Chairman
Bridgwater & Albion RFC

Chris Moore
Safeguarding Officer
Bridgwater & Albion RFC

Applies to Age-Grade and Senior Rugby

1. Purpose

Bridgwater & Albion RFC is committed to providing a safe, welcoming and enjoyable environment for everyone involved in rugby. Respect, teamwork, enjoyment, discipline and sportsmanship apply on the pitch, on the touchline, in changing rooms and throughout club premises. The club will not accept abuse, intimidation, discriminatory conduct, violence, serious antisocial behaviour or the possession, supply or use of illegal drugs on club premises or at club activities.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all players, including Age-Grade and senior teams, coaches, team managers, match officials, volunteers, parents and carers, spectators, members, committee members, employees, contractors and visitors. It applies during matches, training, tours, events and other club activities, and throughout club-controlled facilities, including pitches, touchlines, stands, car parks, entrances, bars, function rooms, toilets, changing rooms, showers, corridors and external areas. It also applies to conduct away from club grounds, including online conduct, where there is a clear connection to the club and the conduct may affect the safety or wellbeing of club members, Age-Grade players, staff or volunteers, or the club's safe operation.

For this policy, "Age-Grade player" means a child or young person participating in rugby under the applicable RFU age-grade framework. "Club activity" means an activity organised, authorised or formally supported by the club. "Club-controlled facilities" means premises or areas owned, occupied, hired or managed by the club for an activity. "Designated safeguarding contact" means the person authorised to receive safeguarding concerns when the Club Safeguarding Officer is unavailable or where a concern involves that officer.

3. Expected standards

- Treat everyone with dignity and respect, regardless of age, disability, sex, race, nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or other protected characteristic.
- Follow reasonable instructions from coaches, match officials, club officers, event staff and those responsible for safety.
- Support players positively and recognise effort, learning, teamwork and enjoyment as well as performance.
- Respect referees and assistant referees. Disagreement must never become abuse, intimidation, threats or physical confrontation.
- Use language and behaviour appropriate to a mixed-age club environment, particularly where children and young people are present.
- Raise concerns through the appropriate club contact rather than retaliating, spreading rumours or escalating a confrontation.

Coaches, team managers, club officers, committee members, captains, safeguarding personnel and anyone exercising authority or influence hold a position of trust. They must model the standards in this policy, use their authority fairly and only for a proper club purpose, maintain appropriate boundaries, avoid favouritism, humiliation, coercion and retaliation, and take reasonable action when they witness misconduct. Silence, inaction or informal protection of a person whose conduct presents a risk is not acceptable.

4. Unacceptable behaviour

The following conduct is prohibited. This list gives examples and is not exhaustive:

- Verbal abuse, swearing directed at a person, insults, humiliation, threatening or intimidating language, harassment, stalking or repeated unwanted contact.
- Physical aggression, fighting, assault, threatening gestures, throwing objects, deliberate damage to property or encouraging others to do so.
- Racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist or other discriminatory abuse; sexual harassment; unwanted sexual comments, touching or conduct.
- Bullying, cyberbullying, abusive messages or posts, or sharing humiliating images or personal information without consent.
- Aggressive or persistent abuse of referees, coaches, players, parents, volunteers, staff or opposition supporters.
- Antisocial conduct in club facilities, including disorderly or threatening behaviour, deliberate disruption, vandalism, theft, unsafe horseplay, misuse of facilities or refusing reasonable safety instructions.
- Retaliation against anyone who raises a concern, reports an incident or participates in an investigation.
- Conduct that places children or adults at risk, including inappropriate one-to-one contact, intimidation, or behaviour that compromises safeguarding.

Misuse of authority or influence is prohibited. This includes threatening selection, playing time, access, references, opportunities or continued membership to secure compliance; punishing or disadvantaging someone for raising a concern; using private or public criticism to humiliate; pressuring a person to keep concerns within the team; or using status, personal relationships or informal influence to obstruct reporting or accountability.

5. Match-day and touchline behaviour

- Encourage all players and respect both teams. Let coaches coach and referees referee.
- Do not shout abusive, discriminatory or threatening comments or give instructions that undermine the coach or confuse players.
- Do not criticise, ridicule or put down a player, whether publicly, privately or after the match.
- Do not confront match officials during or immediately after a game. Any concern should be raised calmly through the team manager or club's recognised process.
- Parents and carers should focus on their child's enjoyment, effort and development, including on the journey home.
- These standards apply equally to senior rugby. Competitive pressure is not an excuse for abuse or poor sportsmanship.

6. Behaviour in club facilities

The code applies just as strongly away from the pitch as it does during rugby. Members and visitors must behave responsibly in the clubhouse, bar, changing rooms, toilets, car park and all other club areas. Do not threaten, intimidate, harass, fight, damage property, obstruct safe access or create an environment in which others feel unsafe. Respect privacy in changing rooms and toilets; photography or recording in these areas is not permitted. Follow venue rules and instructions from authorised club personnel. A person may be required to leave an area or the premises if their behaviour creates a risk.

7. Alcohol, illegal drugs and impairment

The club will not tolerate the possession, use, supply or sale of illegal drugs on club premises or at club activities. Suspected drug dealing or supply must be reported promptly to a club officer and, where appropriate, the police. Do not put yourself at risk by confronting a person suspected of supplying drugs.

No person may participate in training, a match, coaching, officiating, driving on club business or undertaking a safety-critical role while impaired by illegal drugs, misused medication or alcohol. Alcohol must be consumed responsibly and in line with licensing conditions and club rules. Supplying alcohol or illegal drugs to anyone under 18 is prohibited. Adults must not encourage or pressure young people to drink or use drugs. Prescribed medication used as directed is not prohibited; anyone whose medication may affect safe participation should seek appropriate medical advice and inform the relevant responsible person.

Where someone appears impaired or poses a risk, the club may stop them participating, arrange safe support or transport, ask them to leave and/or contact emergency services or the police as appropriate. This policy does not replace applicable law, licensing conditions, RFU rules or safeguarding procedures.

8. Safeguarding and Age-Grade rugby

The welfare of children and young people is paramount. Any concern that a child may be at risk of harm, or any allegation of abuse involving a child, must be referred promptly through the club's safeguarding procedures and to the Club Safeguarding Officer / designated safeguarding contact. Do not promise confidentiality, conduct your own investigation or delay a referral while trying to resolve matters informally. If a child or anyone else is in immediate danger, call 999.

Adults must maintain appropriate boundaries with Age-Grade players. Any incident involving a child must be handled in a way that protects the child, preserves privacy and follows current RFU safeguarding requirements. This policy applies to everyone at the club; young people should also be given a safe, age-appropriate way to report concerns.

Please refer to the club's safeguarding policy and current RFU safeguarding procedures for further details.

9. Reporting an incident

Anyone affected by an incident, witnessing one or receiving a report should follow the steps below. Immediate safety takes priority. Once everyone is safe, the incident should be reported and recorded promptly using the appropriate club, safeguarding or emergency route.

- If safe to do so, move away from the situation and seek help from the team manager, coach, club officer or event lead.
- For immediate danger, serious violence, suspected criminal activity or urgent medical need, call 999. For non-emergency police matters, use 101 where appropriate.
- Report safeguarding concerns directly through the club's safeguarding route. Do not rely solely on an informal conversation with a coach or team manager.
- Record the facts as soon as possible: date, time, location, people involved, what was seen or heard, witnesses and any action taken. Separate fact from opinion.
- Keep messages, photographs or other relevant evidence safe and do not circulate it more widely than necessary.
- Do not retaliate, investigate allegations yourself or promise an outcome.

Reports should be made to the relevant team manager or coach, Club Secretary, Club Chair or designated club officer. Safeguarding matters should go to the Club Safeguarding Officer or designated safeguarding contact. If a concern involves the person who would normally receive the report, or anyone with authority over the person reporting, it must be taken to another appropriate officer, an independent safeguarding contact or the relevant RFU safeguarding route.

10. How the club will respond

The club will take reports seriously and respond fairly and proportionately, with immediate safety and safeguarding needs taking priority. An appropriate club officer or committee member who is not directly involved in the matter will coordinate the response. The club may introduce precautionary interim measures while a concern is assessed, including separating people, increasing supervision, restricting access to facilities, suspending participation or asking someone to leave. These measures are not a finding of guilt and will be reviewed as the matter progresses. Where appropriate and lawful, those directly involved will be told who is coordinating the matter, what process will be followed and when they can expect an update.

Where a report concerns a coach, team manager, club officer, committee member, safeguarding contact or another person with authority over the person reporting, it must be referred to an appropriate person who is independent of the allegation and has no material conflict of interest. The subject of the concern must not investigate the matter, select the investigator, control the information provided to decision-makers or take part in decisions about interim measures or outcomes. The person reporting must be offered an alternative contact and protected from retaliation or disadvantage.

The club will gather relevant information, give those involved a reasonable opportunity to respond where appropriate, maintain a factual written record, store records securely and limit information-sharing to those who need it for safety, safeguarding, disciplinary or legal purposes. The club will not promise absolute confidentiality and may need to share information with the RFU, the police, social care or another relevant agency. Serious allegations may be referred to those bodies, and the club will not obstruct or attempt to replace a statutory investigation.

11. Possible consequences

Depending on the seriousness, context, previous conduct and applicable rules, action may include a warning, apology or restorative action where suitable, removal from a match or event, suspension from training or playing, restriction or withdrawal of clubhouse or ground access, suspension or termination of membership, a ban from club premises, referral to the RFU, or referral to the police or another authority. Any formal action will follow the club's constitution, disciplinary procedures, applicable RFU rules and relevant legal requirements. A parent or spectator's conduct will be addressed in its own right and will not automatically result in punishment of a child.

12. Responsibilities

- Everyone: understand and follow this policy, act respectfully and report concerns.
- Coaches and team managers: model the standards in this policy; create an environment in which concerns can be raised without fear of disadvantage; set clear, consistent and age-appropriate expectations; challenge low-level behaviour promptly and safely; record and escalate serious, repeated or safeguarding concerns; maintain appropriate professional boundaries; avoid conflicts of interest and favouritism; and never use selection, playing time, access or status to silence, punish or pressure another person.
- Club officers and committee: communicate and enforce this policy consistently; ensure people in positions of authority understand and acknowledge their responsibilities; provide appropriate training and reporting

routes; ensure reports are recorded, assessed and handled by people without conflicts of interest; consider necessary risk controls and interim measures; monitor patterns of conduct and repeat concerns; and review whether failures of supervision, culture or governance contributed to an incident.

- Club Safeguarding Officer / designated safeguarding contact: manage safeguarding referrals in line with current club and RFU procedures.
- Parents and carers: support positive participation and ensure their conduct does not undermine the safety, enjoyment or dignity of players.

Holding a coaching, management, committee, safeguarding or other position of authority is conditional on understanding and following this policy, any applicable code of conduct, safeguarding requirements and role-specific training. To support compliance, the club may require written acknowledgement, refresher training, supervision, mentoring or a conduct improvement plan. A serious or repeated failure to meet these standards, including a failure to report or act on known risks, may result in removal from duties, restriction of authority, suspension or other action under the club's procedures.

13. Review and approval

This policy should be read alongside the club's safeguarding policy, disciplinary rules, codes of conduct, social media guidance, facility and bar rules, and current RFU regulations and guidance. Where requirements differ, applicable law, RFU requirements and the club's formally adopted procedures take precedence. The committee should review this policy at least annually and after any serious incident or material change in RFU guidance.

Policy owner	Bridgwater & Albion RFC Committee – Chris Moore
Approval	Approved by Committee
Version / date	Draft v1 – October 2026
Next review	Within 12 months of approval