



Club Guide

Who is this process for?

This process is for clubs with 17 year old male and female players who wish to play adult club rugby.

Why is the regulation and process changing?

There have been some significant updates to safeguarding requirements as defined by the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) for children playing in adult sport in the UK. These RFU Regulation and process changes have been introduced to ensure our clubs are not putting themselves or their members at risk.

The process will support our clubs in:

1. Aligning to the updated DBS requirements.
2. Safeguarding the 17 years old playing adult rugby.
3. Safeguarding the adults they are playing with/against and those organising the adult rugby.
4. Ensuring there is robust, consistent assessment and approval process for a 17 year old to play adult rugby.

There is evidence that in the past, 17 year olds have often been asked to play adult rugby to meet the needs of a team rather than the development needs of the player. This was often done without an appropriate assessment of the player's physical and emotional development. In a number of cases this affected their transition to adult rugby and resulted in players leaving the game as they were playing outside their friendship groups and in an inappropriate adult environment.

What is the 2-stage process?

1. The Club must apply for and be approved by its Constituent Body (CB) to play 17 year olds in adult rugby. This is done by completing and submitting the **Playing Adult Rugby – Club Approval** form and process **each season**.
2. The Club must assess each individual 17 year old who wishes to play adult rugby and gain approval from its CB for the player to do so. This is done by completing and submitting the **Playing Adult Rugby – Player Approval** form and process. Once approved the individual can play adult rugby through to their 18th birthday.



Are you saying 17 year olds shouldn't play adult rugby?

An RFU Group involving club volunteers and coaches from across the country reviewed the adult playing age during 2018. It was agreed to maintain that from their 17th birthday is the date a player is permitted to play adult rugby. However, the group also recognised that a more robust process should be in place to assess the player's suitability and there should be a neutral element in approving this. In some cases through the new process it may well be agreed that it is not in the players' best interest to play adult rugby – the process helps to determine and support this.

What is the process for male England Academy Players and female players in Premier 15s?

There is a specific form for male EAPs which is completed and submitted to the RFU Head of Academies for review. In the female game, all players use the standard process as outlined in this guide, however if the request is to play in the Tyrells Premier 15s, the completed forms are sent to the RFU Head of Women's Performance for review, not the CB.

When do we apply for approval for 17 year olds to play adult rugby?

It is recommended that clubs seek Playing Adult Rugby – Club Approval either before or at the beginning of the season if they think they will have 17 year olds wishing to play adult rugby that season. This ensures they have everything in place to then be able to apply for individual Player Approval during that season when the situation arises for the individual.

Why do clubs need CB approval first?

Clubs need to be able to demonstrate they have the infrastructure and ability for a 17 year old to play adult rugby (e.g. that, if needed, separate shower facilities are available and they have the suitable people in place to support a child in an adult environment). We also need clubs to demonstrate they have a proven record of being player centred so there is confidence that decisions on playing adult rugby are made in the player's, not the club's, best interest. The CBs are best placed to assess a submission and determine if a club has the right things in place for a 17 year old to play with adults. The process will provide information to help the CB make this decision.

We are an adult only club – do we need to do this?

Yes, if a 17 year old is to play in any adult team, the club should follow the regulation and process.

We have a U21 or U23 team – do we need to follow the same process?

Yes, this constitutes an adult team. Age Grade teams end after the Under 18 age group.



What things do we need to do to help demonstrate our readiness as a club to play a 17 year old in adult rugby?

Clubs should follow the checklist below:

	What do we need to do?	Supporting information
☐	Have a Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO) who has completed “RFU IN Touch”	If you have a junior section you will already have a CSO who will support. If you are an adult only club you will need to create the role of CSO and record this on GMS. Local In Touch courses can be found via www.englandrugby.com/olcb
☐	Adopt the RFU club safeguarding policy and display within the club	Please visit www.englandrugby.com/safeguarding
☐	Ensure players are registered on GMS and that medical and emergency contact details are provided to team managers. Confirm that photographic consent has been provided.	17 and 18 year old are registered via their parents on GMS. The process for this can be found www.englandrugby.com/playerregistration The club data officer should provide medical information, emergency contact and photographic consent to the team manager.
☐	Completed Safeguarding audit on GMS	This will be available on the “questionnaires” section on GMS.
☐	Adult team Coaches undergone RFU Enhanced DBS	DBS applications are made via the Club Safeguarding Officer. New CSOs should email dbseapp@rfu.com to set up their DBS account. Further information can be found here: https://www.englandrugby.com/governance/safeguarding/disclosure-and-barring-service
☐	Adult team manager undergone RFU Enhanced DBS	
☐	Adult team captain undergone RFU enhanced DBS	
☐	Adult team roles (i.e. physio, 1 st aider) undergone RFU enhanced DBS	
☐	Ensure there are separate changing + shower facilities available for 17 year olds (if the player requests)	
☐	Submit the “Club approval form” and received approval from CB	This form is located on www.englandrugby.com/regulations This application needs to be made annually.
☐	Complete “Player approval form” and submit to CB?	This form is located on www.englandrugby.com/regulations Completed forms should be secured safely online and password protected and paper copies destroyed.
☐	Has assigned a suitable adult from within team and management as mentor for 17 year old.	
☐	On a match day: Ensure referee and opposition are informed there is 17 year old in the side	
☐	On a match day: Ensure parents have provided consent for travel arrangement, remembering that no child should be left alone in a car with an adult.	Further information can be found via the RFU Safeguarding policy.

**Does every adult in the team need to complete a DBS?**

No, only those in positions of trust and responsibility – e.g. manager, coach, first aider, captain.

Adult players however should be reminded of their responsibility with a child playing in the team, with regards to behaviour, alcohol licensing laws etc.

What if we cannot provide separate shower facilities for 17 year olds?

We anticipate that most 17 year olds will be happy to shower and change with their team mates, however alternative arrangements may need to be made if a young person requests this, such as allowing the 17 year old to shower first. We want to protect everyone in the game and it is sensible to avoid a situation where a 17 year old is left alone with only one other adult in the shower or changing area.

Is there a limit to the number of 17s who can play adult rugby?

No, however the assessment needs to be completed for each individual. Once approved a player can play adult rugby up to the point they turn 18. The assessment and application must demonstrate that it is in each player's development interests to do so – not only in the interests of the team / club.

Why do we need to inform the referee and opposition?

The purpose is to safeguard the adults as much as it is the 17 year old – they will be able to modify their behaviour knowing that a child is present and avoid leaving themselves (even accidentally) open to accusation. The club does not need to identify who the 17 year olds are, they will simply inform the opposition that there is a 17 year old playing/involved/present. This is as much about what happens off the pitch as it is about what happens on the pitch and is a critical element of the safeguarding of the young person and adults they are involved with.

What if we haven't got a Level 2 coach? Is there anyone else we can do this?

A Level 2 award holder (includes England Rugby Coaching Award) must "endorse" the assessment has been undertaken. This is the minimum we'd expect for a coach to make an assessment and determination of a player's ability to play adult rugby. If you don't have one in your club, ask another club for help.

What about the school game?

This is not applicable in schools and colleges where there isn't adult teams. However, the points in Regulation 15 about playing up and down ages must still be followed.



Who do we send our completed forms to in the CB?

This will be determined and communicated by the CB. If in doubt contact the CB Honorary Secretary in the first instance.

We have not been granted approval from our CB, how do we appeal?

This is a matter between the club and the CB and the club should appeal to the CB directly.

What things do we need to include in our Player Approval application?

The form should be used to build a picture of the player, their ability, development, confidence and competence. Clubs need to demonstrate clear evidence of a good, robust assessment process taking place that is focussed on what is appropriate for the player. The guidance below shows some of the type of things those reviewing your application will be considering in various sections of the form:

Number of years the player has played rugby:	<i>This will help to determine experience of a player. It wouldn't normally be expected for novice 17 year old players to be granted permission to play adult rugby.</i>
Representative rugby the player has played since 15 years old	<i>This should include DPP, Academy & Centre of Excellence. This is to help determine the ability of a player – however a DPP or CB player alone does not mean guaranteed approval, nor should approval not be granted if a player hasn't played rep rugby.</i>
Adult team(s) the player is likely to play for:	<i>How many teams the club has and what level they play in; what coaching support the club has in each team; are "social teams" a suitable environment for the young player.</i>
Will the player also continue to play Age Grade Rugby?	<i>If yes, there is evidence this helps their transition to the adult game with their peers. However, how will you try to balance their playing/training time? Are they going to be overplaying by playing twice in a weekend?</i>
Reason for the player to play out of their Age Grade:	<i>The explanation should focus on benefits to the player. Clubs should not be solely applying based on a club/team being short on numbers; it must also be of benefit to the young player's development and retention in rugby.</i>
Requested start date for playing Adult Rugby	<i>Note: Approval is for up to 12 months, until the player is 18 years of age This should help demonstrate that a club has a planned approach to support a young player. Approval cannot be given retrospectively.</i>



Player Assessment: <i>To include findings and how each element was measured. The Age Grade Codes of Practice provides guidance on supporting evidence and how it might be measured. Clear evidence and fact is crucial in these sections. Approvers will be looking for clubs to show a good and robust assessment process taking place, backed by a UKCC Level 2 coach. Approved players should all have a "Yes" in each of the boxes. If the CB believes that the assessment is less than satisfactory from a welfare and safeguarding point of view, they should not approve the player to play adult rugby.</i>		Suitable for Adult Rugby?
Skill level and ability	<i>A player should usually be one of the top performers in their age group – not just in their playing position. A coach should have observed them in training and match situations and be comfortable in their ability to manage the contact situation in particular. Their playing experience at CB/DPP or school team may help to make a decision here. Does their ability match with the playing level of the adult team they are potentially going into?</i>	Yes/No
Physical development for their age	<i>Club should detail their weight, height and how this compares to others in the similar positions in the team. If the club/school/college have other measurements taken during PE (e.g. grip strength) this should be included. This should compare to a player of a similar position in the adult team. Approvers should be confident this player will be physically safe to play in the adult team requested.</i>	Yes/No
Social & emotional development for their age	<i>In this section clubs should detail leadership roles in the club or school (captain, young leader, prefect) as well as detailing their current interactions with adults in club. Detail about how they are in school/college may also support this section. Players who demonstrate resilience, emotional intelligence and who will be able to cope with adult settings may be more appropriate. Remember, players want to play with their friends – what is the impact of removing them from a friendship group in the club?</i>	Yes/No

Coach Endorsement (This assessment must be endorsed by a coach of at least UKCC Level 2):

Coach Name:	Signature:	<i>This is further demonstration of you taking the assessment seriously and someone with a technical knowledge and credibility endorsing it. Approvers should be looking for current coaching award and evidence of current, active CPD or further qualification.</i>
RFU ID Number:	Date:	

Declaration:

We certify that all the information on this form is correct and if approved, agree to play the above player in Adult Rugby in accordance with RFU Regulation 15

Proposed by:	Signature:	<i>Should be a position of responsibility within your club (e.g. Age Grade Chair, Honorary Secretary, Head Coach).</i>
E-mail:	Club Role:	



Parent or Guardian:	Signature:	<i>This needs to be signed to ensure those with parental responsibility are shown to be involved and aware of the potential for their child to play in adult rugby.</i>
E-mail:	Date:	

How should we complete the player assessment part of the Player Approval process?

In addition to advice in the above, the Age Grade Codes of Practice www.englandrugby.com/codesofpractice details the considerations coaches should make for players.