



RHIENI RYGBI

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS
IN WELSH RUGBY



Introduction

The Welsh Rugby Union want children and young people to enjoy taking part in rugby, and parents play a key role by ensuring that children are provided with these opportunities.

Clubs, Hubs and Regions strive to develop safe and inclusive environments, to deliver great experiences across the game.

Parents play a critical role in encouraging and supporting children to participate in Welsh Rugby to ensure that they have fun and enjoy themselves, but also develop themselves as players and people.

Youth and Mini and Junior rugby in Wales are complex social environments. 'Recent research has started to delve into the complexity of parental involvement in sport and help researchers and practitioners alike to understand that sport parenting is not simply a matter of good versus bad or do's versus don'ts, but an intricate social experience influenced by a whole host of factors and variables' (Knight, Berrow and Harwood 2017)

The WRU promote positive behaviour and provide resources and support to ensure that we have safe and inclusive environments. Parents have a vital role to play in developing an environment where children can thrive, by participating in Welsh Rugby.

Parents play an important role in their child's sporting life, both when things are going well and by supporting them if something goes wrong. They play an important role in sport and positive parental behaviour has some great benefits for clubs and hubs in Welsh Rugby.

Parents – Positive Involvement

Your positive involvement means that

- Children are more likely to have chances to try new things, stay in sport and reach their potential
- They will have more fun if they can share it with you
- Children have someone to talk to when they have challenges
- You can help your child have a safe and great experience



Parents as Positive Role Models

Parents have a huge influence on their children and have a key role to play in their child's development in Welsh Rugby. The most important aspect of this is by being a supportive parent, and here are some examples of how parents can positively influence their child's rugby experience -

- being a positive role model for children
- encouraging their child to take up, enjoy and achieve in their sport
- encouraging their child to participate in sports activities for longer
- supporting their child in practical ways - such as, providing transport or buying kit
- getting involved by volunteering within the club
- helping out with other aspects for the rugby club or hub - such as, websites, promotion or fundraising
- supporting and motivating their child and the wider team
- reinforcing positive aspects of sports participation
- demonstrating that you care about your child and their rugby experience

Parents can help their children reach their full potential by knowing what their child wants and what motivates them. If parents know this, then they can understand what their child is trying to achieve and what support they need to achieve this.

Parents can provide support, and along with others improve the rugby experience of their child. It is important to be a positive role model within the rugby environment and ensure that their child has great experiences and is engaged in a safe and inclusive environment with Coaches that are appropriately competent, qualified and vetted.

Parents can also be a constructive influence in building positive relationships with others such as Coaches and Team Managers, other volunteers and parents within the club. It is important to focus upon their child's development through an environment that will enable them to maximise learning and improvement. This can be achieved by teaching them the importance of being coachable, through great teamwork and being a team player.

Confidence and humility are two key components in learning and development, and by teaching them humility but also building confidence, this will set them up to recognise how you learn and develop through both failure and success. This is why it is important to ensure that children are grounded and build resilience, as this will enable them to problem solve through persistence.

Communication and Conversations are Key

Parents should take an interest in their child's activities, through positive encouragement, by praising the child for their effort and not the outcome or result. There is also a balance to be struck between constantly praising their child, as this will lead to issues if they fail, and failing is an important part of the learning process. There is also a need to give them praise when it's deserved, not just about their own performance but their commitment and dedication to the team and the sport.

Parents should allow their child to discuss their rugby experience, and this can be done by providing the child with the opportunity to open up and freely talk about their experiences, and if they do then this is a really positive step. If the child is not open and does not want to talk then it may be better to wait, perhaps they haven't enjoyed the session or feel that they didn't perform well, so gentle encouragement is important here as we all have bad days.

The child may be tired or disappointed, so parents may need to give them some space to self-reflect. This is a potential flashpoint, where emotions may be running high, and parents know their children and should know the right time to have such conversations.

At the right time some subtle questioning may assist, and the child may engage, which will enable them to reflect and recognise what they have done well but also what they have not done so well. However, it's important that you don't interrogate the child, don't ask questions just for the sake of it, be comfortable in silence, there may be an opportunity to talk later.

How parents question their child, and the style of questioning is important, so be supportive and use open questions to elicit the maximum amount of information from the child. Parents can use open questions through the use of 5WH – Who, What, Where, When, Why and How. Asking why their child did something, can sometimes be too direct, so parents should consider their tone and how they communicate both verbally and non-verbally. Positive non-verbal communication is key to how parents interact with their child in these situations.

If parents can get the child to start the conversation, then this is really encouraging. Positive affirmation is important, so parents should start by telling the child how much enjoyment they get from watching and supporting them when they play.

These are some questions that may assist in conversations after training or playing -

- How did it go today?
- What went well?
- What didn't go so well?
- What do you enjoy about playing rugby?

There will be some children who are intrinsically motivated, and will ask for feedback from Coaches and Parents, and it is important to be objective and honest, but as importantly, when delivering any messages, is to make any feedback supportive and constructive.

Children have different levels of maturity as they develop within the game, and rugby union is a late developing sport. It's important to recognise this and give the child positive reinforcement, as some may be early developers through advanced physiological maturation and others late developers. This means that some children may see other members of the squad developing more rapidly than they are. However, if they are supported, engaged and are enjoying the experience, then they will continue to participate, and there are always opportunities for late developers.

Teamwork

Rugby Union is a team sport, so Parents should encourage the importance of being a team player, and the benefits of being part of a team, whilst also balancing the child's individual needs.

Children play the game because they enjoy it and everyone has different skills and abilities, and also different goals. There are many different reasons why children are attracted to playing rugby union, but also why they stay in the game and continue to participate throughout their life -

- Enjoyment and Fun
- Excitement
- Social Attachment
- Emotional Attachment
- Developing a sense of purpose
- Developing a sense of belonging
- Healthy lifestyle
- Being part of a team
- Making Friends

Touchline Behaviour Top Tips for Parents



Stay informed: Familiarise yourself with the Game and the applicable Laws. This will help them better understand the Game, create empathy and appreciate the challenges faced by the players and Referees. It will also manage expectations.



Let the Coaches Coach: Avoid coaching from the sidelines. Trust the coaching staff to do their job. If you have concerns or questions about coaching decisions, address them privately with the coach outside of the match day environment.



Show respect for Officials and Coaches: Parents should show respect for referees and coaches. Even if you disagree with a call or decision, it's important to remember that these officials are often volunteers (and perhaps only at the start of their refereeing journey). They are also learning about the Game, even if it is a different facet of the Game – they are doing their best. Refrain from criticising, shouting, or arguing with them. Show encouragement and support for their development.



Focus upon your parenting performance as well as your child's performance: Parents are likely to focus upon the performance of their child on the field, when spectating. It's important that you provide positive support and messaging for the whole team.

What is in place in relation to Safeguarding at the Club?

These are some questions that Parents can ask to ensure that there is a safe and inclusive environment at the club

- Have the volunteers completed a safe recruitment process?
- Does the club have a Safeguarding Policy to safeguard children?
- What happens if there is an accident or injury, is there a First Aider attached to the team?
- Who can you talk to regarding any concerns? There should be a designated Club Safeguarding Officer at the club.
- Are the Coaches qualified, vetted and competent?
- What training have the coaches received - Your club can tell you what level of training their coaches have. Safeguarding training is also available to anyone working with children.

Recognising and Reporting Concerns

A child may approach their parent or guardian, with a concern about something that's happened to them or something they may have witnessed. It's important for you to address these concerns and report any concerns to the right people.

If you're worried that your child is being abused or put at risk during rugby activities, it's vital that you talk to someone.

- If you're worried about your child or something they've witnessed, talk to them and listen to any worries or concerns they might have. Try not to be dismissive, judgemental or blame anyone. Have an open mind.
- Don't panic, however small or large the worries or concerns may be, someone is available to help you.

Every club should have a Club Safeguarding Officer and a WRU Safeguarding Policy that outlines the procedures in place for dealing with concerns, and parents can ask to have access to the policy. The WRU Safeguarding Policy can be accessed online. This will help you to follow the processes in place and feel confident to make a report.

PARENTS IN WELSH RUGBY - HOW THEY SUPPORT THEIR CHILDREN

SUPPORTER	COACH	REFEREE	TAXI DRIVER	KIT WASHER
FUND RAISER	ADMINISTRATOR	TEAM MANAGER	FIRST AIDER/ MEDICAL	TOUCH JUDGE
PARENT	TOUR ORGANISER	CATERING	CSO OR SAFEGUARDING SUPPORT	SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER

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