

Club Model: Case Study of Good Practice

Ballynahinch RFC

Model Club section:

Club Welfare

Area of good practice:

Child Welfare Officer

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Overview

Child Welfare and Child Protection is an area of club life that Ballynahinch RFC have always held as a high priority particularly in recent years.

This case study highlights the steps taken in their recruitment process to successfully appoint a new Child Welfare Officer as well as the positive impact it has had on the club.

The intended outcomes from their recruitment and integration of a new CWO were:

- The appointment of the RIGHT volunteer for the role
- An audit of the Youth & Mini sections with coaches attaining qualifications, Access NI checks and Safeguarding training
- Successful integration of the new CWO into the club set-up



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What was delivered?

Ballynahinch RFC deployed a successful succession plan for volunteer recruitment in order to obtain a new Child Welfare Officer. They recognised that the volunteer currently holding the Child Welfare Officer role was a mini rugby parent who would be stepping down and they saw this as an opportunity to do an audit of the Youth & Mini Rugby sections with a focus on recruiting the RIGHT person to be the next CWO. The recruitment process was led by the Mini Convenor who worked closely with Kerry Spence (IRFU Spirit of Rugby Officer in Ulster Rugby) to integrate a parent who had volunteered for the role. Following on from this appointment Ballynahinch hosted a Safeguarding course for all their Youth & Mini coaches and parents.

Why was it successful?

The appointment of a CWO and the processes behind it were successful due to the steps taken by the club. They recognised that there would be a gap in the role of Child Welfare Officer and were proactive in liaising with Ulster Rugby staff and their Youth & Mini conveners to recruit the correct volunteer. The new CWO was then successfully integrated into the club so that all coaches and parents were aware of her role and the volunteer had a clear understanding of what the role would entail. Following on from the appointment of a new CWO Ballynahinch conducted an audit of their Youth and Mini sections which led to the club hosting a Safeguarding Workshop for all coaches and parents.

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Steps to success

Below are some of the notable steps taken to allow Ballynahinch RFC to successfully appoint and integrate a Child Welfare Officer:

- An awareness that the club needed a succession plan to move on from the previous volunteer in the role
- A well organised recruitment process which was closely linked to the Youth & Mini sections
- Liaising with Ulster Rugby staff on the correct protocols
- An audit of Youth & Mini sections leading to the hosting of a Safeguarding Workshop at the club for coaches and parents.

What has been the impact?

The impact can be seen in the fact that the club now has an experienced volunteer in an important role who is happy with what their role entails. The club also now has the knowledge that all their coaches are covered with qualifications, vetting and Safeguarding. This is important as it means the children and the coaches are safe and protected. It also makes life easier for coaches and convenors as the CWO can take some of the workload off them, allowing coaches to coach and Youth/Mini convenors to organise.

Why is the Club better off?

- Children and Young people feel safe and are protected
- Coaches and parents are protected
- Young people and parents are aware of the club's safeguarding protocols
- Audit of youth and mini coaches allows club to ascertain who needs to acquire qualifications and plan accordingly
- RIGHT volunteer in the RIGHT role
- CWO appointment and clearly defined role allows coaches to concentrate on the 'on pitch' activity

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What are the key learnings?

There are a number of key learnings that can be taken away from this particular case study:

- Child Welfare should always be a big priority within rugby clubs
- This is a good example of a successful recruitment, appointment and integration of a volunteer through close working relationships with Ulster Rugby Branch staff and mini/youth convenors
- The volunteer role was clearly defined and as a result tasks have been taken away from coaches and convenors, allowing them to focus on the 'on field' activities
- Continuous audits of volunteers, roles and coaches are vitally important
- Close working links between the Child Welfare Officer and youth/mini convenors make for a more successful transition within a volunteer role.