

Volunteer Coaches Policy

Date: April 2026

Review Date: April 2028

INTRODUCTION

This policy is intended to provide all volunteer coaches with guidance on the expected standards of behaviour and practice required by Ashford Rugby Football Club (ARFC).

The policy is split into 2 parts. Part 1 covers the expected standards of coaching which are expected by ARFC volunteer coaches and Part 2 provides additional guidance related to associated issues which may occur in the delivery of the volunteer coach's role.

The policy is intended to provide clarity and guidance to all volunteer coaches and ensure that the standards of coaching provided to the members of ARFC are of the highest possible standard.

The ARFC director of rugby is the owner of this policy and is ultimately responsible for all aspects of this policy.

Queries or clarifications related to this policy should be directed to the Director of Rugby.

PART 1 - COACHING STANDARDS

1. Coaching Statement

This section outlines the role and responsibilities of all ARRC coaches. These principles have been developed and put in place to provide long term development of all rugby aspects, rather than short term results. Our overarching goal is to nurture outstanding rugby players who are exceptional young men and women with a passion for the game with a strong attachment to the club.

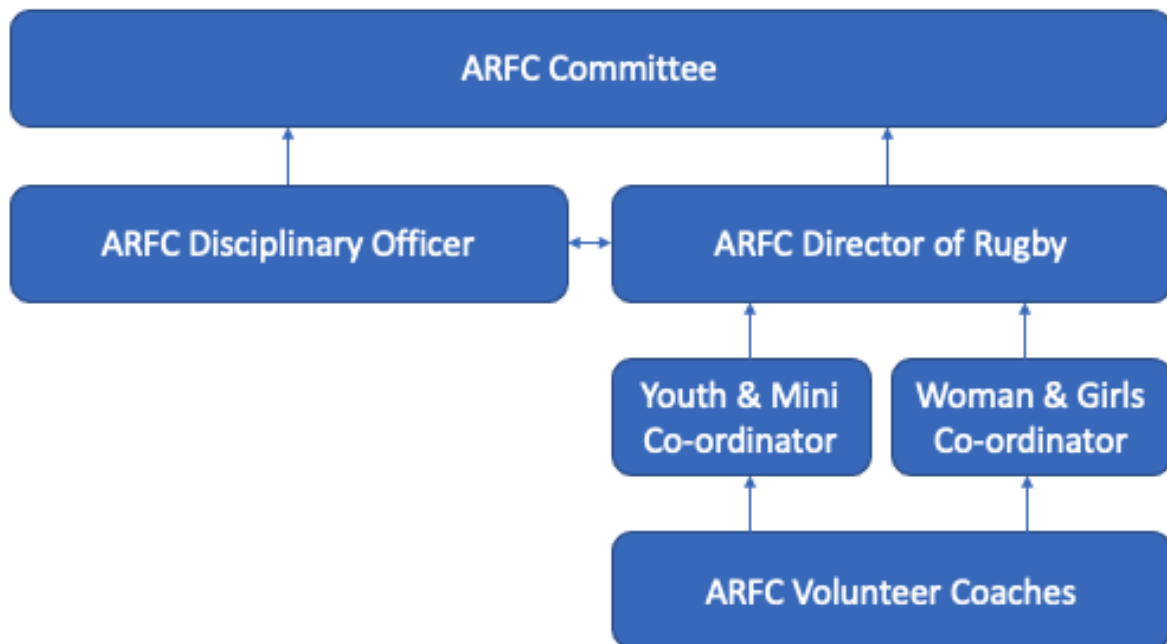
In order to achieve this, Ashford RFC players should be competent in a **variety of positions**. They should play confident, risk free, ball focused and attacking rugby allied with an aggressive, accurate, disciplined defence. We are also aiming for them to display a well-developed range of core technical skills and a rounded tactical understanding. They can adapt to different situations and solve problems. They believe that the team comes first, that we play the way we train and that we are best at the things that require no skill, such as discipline, work rate, physicality, focus and friendships.

Development of this goal will require all coaches, across the whole club (to encompass Mini & Juniors, Women's and Men's Senior Squads) to feel supported in setting high expectations for all players. High expectations entail appropriately planned and executed training programmes.

2. Coaching Structure

The diagram below outlines the coaching and reporting structure at ARFC.

Volunteer coaches should follow the reporting structure outlined below unless the issue relates to their respective co-ordinator. In this case the issue can be reported to the director of rugby or the disciplinary officer.



3. Discipline guidance for coaches

Our role as a rugby club is to develop not only the skills of our young players but instil in them the values, ethics and discipline required to enjoy and succeed in their rugby journey.

As a coach at ARFC you are expected to adhere to the clubs' internal disciplinary procedures, the standards of behaviour outlined in this policy and the ARFC disciplinary process.

Coaches are required to report disciplinary issues to the club disciplinary officer at the earliest available opportunity and will receive a response within 48 hours of receipt of the concern, see section 3.2 for more information.

In addition, the club requires coaches to report the following:

1. If you have a player who is a consistent discipline worry. This is to primarily support the player in question and rectify disciplinary issues at the earliest opportunity.
2. If a player is asked to leave the field by a referee (not a sending off but the referee asks the coach to remove the player) the club is to be informed through a short factual statement e.g. who, what and why.
3. If you as a coach feel the need to remove a player from the field of play on more than one occasion for whatever reason this must be reported.
4. If a player receives a card of any colour from a referee this must be reported.

This process is intended to assist the director of rugby in identifying any patterns of behaviour or issues within the club so help and guidance can be offered.

3.1 Additional disciplinary guidance

- Any player using racist/homophobic/unacceptable language is removed from the match immediately and plays no further part in that game/tournament.
- Any player whose actions on the pitch repeatedly put other players at risk is to be sat out for the remainder of that game and every game until they moderate their behaviour and/or improves their technique. This does not relate to single incidents e.g. a single dangerous tackle, but repeated/pattern of dangerous tackles/leading with an arm etc.
- Players that use language, display values or technique that are not in line with ARFC or RFU values are not to represent the club in matches. They can train and should be encouraged to so they can improve their technique with support from the club. Support will also be offered if the issue related to language and/or values.
- If any player behaves in a racist or non-inclusive manner the director of rugby will organise a meeting with the player and their parents/carers and explain how seriously we take the behaviour and that it will not be tolerated.
- If there is concern about the play of a player (reckless/dangerous) the director of rugby encourages the coaches to book the camera and record a match/training to identify and analyse the behaviour. This footage can be shared with the player in question and is a valuable training tool to address issues related to technique.

3.2 Disciplinary Process

See below.

DISCIPLINARY PROCESS – ARFC

Please Note - This is an internal ARFC document related to complaints and/or incidents within the club. It is not to be used for the submission of incidents to Kent RFU or when dealing with external clubs or individuals.

Incident Occurs / Complaint Received

- Disciplinary Officer informed of incident at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Severity of incident assessed by Disciplinary Officer using internal criteria, may escalate immediately to level 2/3 and relevant parties may be immediately suspended from the club if applicable.
- In all other circumstances, Disciplinary Officer makes contact with the affected individual/s within 48 hours.
- Discipline officer informs chairman of complaint and if appropriate escalate to Kent RFU Discipline Team.

Level 1 (Aim to resolve/initiate resolution within 1 week)

This level represents the club dispute resolution procedure and is the first stage of the club's disciplinary process.

The Disciplinary Officer will make contact with the relevant parties within 48 hours and attempt to resolve the incident with those concerned. If the incident can be resolved to the satisfaction of the club and the involved parties then no more action is taken.

Notes from the committee will be taken and stored in line with club data protection policy for the required and agreed timescales. Notes are taken to ensure repetition of incidents or patterns of behaviour are recorded and can be acted on at a later date if required.

PLEASE NOTE – This process is intended to be used for lower-level incidents, definitions relating to incidents of this nature are outlined in internal club criteria.

Level 2 (Aim to resolve/initiate resolution within 2 weeks)

This level is attended to address incidents that cannot be resolved between the disciplinary officer and relevant parties (Level 1) or considered too serious to be subject to the club's dispute resolution procedure.

A meeting of the club's disciplinary committee will be called by the disciplinary officer and evidence requested and received from relevant parties, who in some circumstances, may also be asked to attend to provide evidence.

The committee will review all provided evidence, a decision will be made and communicated to all involved parties.

Level 3 (Aim to resolve within 1 week)

This relates to incidents deemed to constitute a serious breach of the coaches/supporters/parent's code of conduct, is related to a criminal offence on club grounds or is otherwise deemed to jeopardise the reputation of the club or the safety of members.

In these circumstances the person responsible for the incident can be suspended from the club immediately by the disciplinary officer. The disciplinary committee will then meet to determine the applicable sanction of the individual/s using internal club criteria.

Incidents which can constitute a level 3 response Include, but are not limited to:

- Theft
- Assault
- Breaches of the club safeguarding policy
- Other criminal offences
- Drug offences

Disciplinary Committee Membership

The membership of the committee includes:

- The Disciplinary Officer (Chair of Committee) - ***if unavailable can be chaired by club chairman or another appropriate committee member.***
- A minimum of two other full committee members, dependent of the nature of the incident in question specific committee members may be expected to attend e.g.
 - The director of rugby (DOR), who is expected to attend if relates to an adult player or a coach
 - The safeguarding officer if the incident relates to safeguarding
 - The fixtures secretary
 - The chair of youth rugby

4. Training Sessions

- Coaches will set up their individual session, involving players from their teams
- After each session, coaches are encouraged to have a 'team talk', to emphasise what was good about the session, identify learning and development points and indicate how these will be developed further in future sessions.
- The 'team talk' should also include allocating jobs to players for putting kit away in the containers (coach or adult will need to supervise and ensure kit is put away in a tidy fashion). Please ensure that kit is put away clean, not covered in mud.
- If kit needs to be cleaned, encourage players/parents/carers to support and help.

5. Coaches Training and CPD

All coaches are required to complete mandatory training.

This includes but is not limited to:

- Appropriate RFU coaching courses consummate for role and responsibility
- RFU Safeguarding Training
- First Aid Training (As applicable)
- Additional training identified by the director of rugby
- Head Case e-learning course

From the Under 10 age group the lead coach of an age group should have completed the England rugby coaching award as a minimum. This is now a year-long Course with modules being completed online.

From the Under 12 age group all coaches should have completed the England rugby coaching award.

Ashford RFC is happy to pay the cost of the course but ask for commitment from the coach to attend the course and share any new knowledge amongst fellow coaches. This will help to promote a community of forward thinking coaches and players through the sharing of outstanding practice. We are also now able to buy coaching credits from England Rugby to pay for courses up front if needed.

Coaches at ARFC are required to complete the training required for their individual role within agreed timescales as stipulated by the director of rugby.

The director of rugby is responsible for coach training and can advise individual coaches on the training requirements expected of them.

6. Age Group Coaching Standards

ARFC adhere to the core RFU principles which govern Rugby Union.

Commonly known as TREDs, these are outlined below:

TEAMWORK

Teamwork is essential to our sport. We welcome all new team members and include all because working as a team enriches our lives. We play selflessly: working for the team, not for ourselves alone, both on and off the field. We take pride in our team, rely on one another and understand that each player has a part to play. We speak out if our team or sport is threatened by inappropriate words or actions.

RESPECT

Mutual respect forms the basis of our sport. We hold in high esteem our sport, its values and traditions and earn the respect of others in the way we behave. We respect our match officials and accept their decisions. We respect opposition players and supporters. We value our coaches and those who run our clubs and treat clubhouses with consideration.

ENJOYMENT

Enjoyment is the reason we play and support rugby union. We encourage players to enjoy training and playing. We use our sport to adopt a healthy lifestyle and build life skills. We safeguard our young players and help them have fun. We enjoy being part of a team and part of the rugby family.

DISCIPLINE

Strong discipline underpins our sport. We ensure that our sport is one of controlled physical endeavour and that we are honest and fair. We obey the laws of the game which ensure an inclusive and exciting global sport. We support our disciplinary system, which protects our sport and upholds its values. We observe the sport's laws and regulations and report serious breaches.

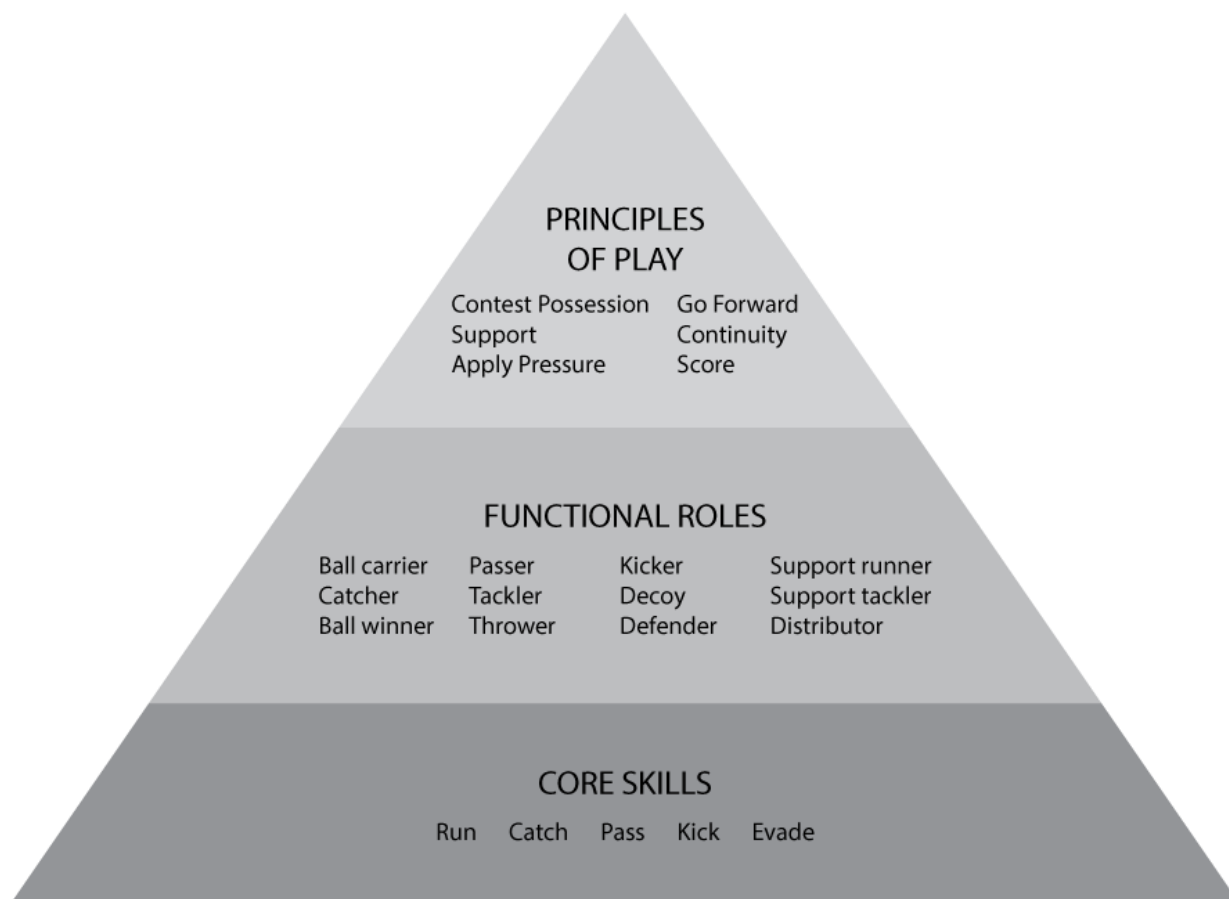
SPORTSMANSHIP

Sportsmanship is the foundation upon which rugby union is built. We uphold the rugby tradition of camaraderie with teammates and opposition. We observe fair play both on and off the pitch and are generous in victory and dignified in defeat. We play to win but not at all costs and recognise both endeavour and achievement. We ensure that the wellbeing and development of individual players is central to all rugby activity.

All ARFC volunteer coaches are expected to uphold and role-model these core principles at all times and promote these through effective coaching practice.

6.1 Individual Age Groups

The expectations of individual age groups are outlined below. The pyramid below outlines the key expectations of mini and junior players as they transition through age grade rugby.



6.2 - U7 –U9

As this is the initial front door to the club and rugby, it is vital that the coaching in this area is of an organised and fun nature at all times.

The use of TREDs, an introduction to the club and the wider values of rugby are integral at this age.

Players should develop experience of attending festivals and fixtures and develop awareness of the expectations on them as representatives of ARFC.

By the age of 9, the player should be able to make use of the core skills on the above pyramid and be able to tell a coach what the TREDs values are.

6.3 - U10 - U12 / U12 U14 Girls

Coaching at this age grade should follow the principles outlined above for U7 – U9.

By the U12 age grade players should have an understanding of functional skills as well as coaches starting to use the principles of play.

There will always be a need to work on the core skills as well and these should be represented in all training sessions.

6.4 - U13-U16 / U16 Girls



The use of the above principles should be added to coaching alongside the pyramid and utilised consistently in whole training session design.

Coaches will be building upon the player's game understanding and patterns of play.

6.5 - Academy U17-U18 / U18 Girls

The Academy will build on principles in the age grade above and be looking at how it can best integrate with the senior sections for both men and women.

The intended outcome is a seamless transition to the adult game for all players.

PART 2 – ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

1. Sponsorship

Age groups can, and are encouraged, to raise funds for their own age groups.

The club identifies commercial revenue generation as all revenue which is received from any company rather than an individual. For clarity and for future donations/sponsors, **all monies whether donation or sponsor are to be managed centrally through the Commercial Manager (Callum Stuckey).**

Below are the rules around financial contributions, either donation or commercial partnership.

7. Individuals who wish to make a Year 1 contribution directly to a team or to the club with nothing wanted in return, will be able to do and this will be ringfenced outside of commercial revenue. All of these contributions must be handled centrally through the Commercial Manager, the main reasons for this are as follows.
 - Allows for a fair and consistent approach
 - Allows the club to be aware of these donations and to formally recognise these contributors throughout the year, for example inviting them to a club lunch.
 - Allows the club to “manage” these contributors with the hope that in time we can develop some “contributors” to “commercial partners”.
8. Any company or representative of a company which wishes to provide revenue to the club or any team within the club will be deemed “Commercial”, with the understanding that there is a return for the investment in the way of marketing, advertising or branding. **All of these relationships must be managed centrally by the Commercial Manager.**
9. In the above case where a company enters into a commercial agreement, there is a club wide rule which is without exception. The club dedicates 75% of that revenue to the team and 25% goes to the clubs commercial pot to be used on a club wide basis. There are no exceptions and every member should recognise that commercial revenue generated by the club can play a large part in the development of the club and it’s facilities as a whole, where we all benefit.
10. It should be clearly recognised that the point of having this ruling is not to deter club members from creating new commercial opportunities, the opposite is in fact true and having this ruling means we can centralise relationships, remain fair to anyone wishing to help the club and also maintain the club facilities and environment generally.

2. Social Media

2.1 Introduction

Members of ARFC are expected to uphold the ethos of the club in all social media interactions. Members will not act in such a way that the image of ARFC is brought into disrepute nor in a way that harms it's immediate and wider rugby community.

2.2 Purpose

Social media a prominent method of communication for the Club and is a key way we engage with the members of our club, along with the wider community.

It is important that the club has a policy which outlines the expectations on all coach's and club officials to use social media in a constructive and positive way which benefits ARFC.

2.3 ARFC Social Media Presence

ARFC's official social media presence is focused on:

- Facebook (main club page)
- Instagram (main club page)

2.4 Social Media Presence for individual age groups

ARFC considers the ladies team and girls' age group to have special dispensation within this guidance due to their focus on growing the women's game. The ladies team and girls age groups have the permission of the club to have their own distinct social media presence focused on Facebook and Instagram which contains ARFC branding.

For all other individual age groups, it is the policy of ARFC that no public facing social media pages or accounts should be established by coaches. If an individual coach wants to share information related to their individual age group on social media this should be sent to the club social media manager who will then share this on the main club pages at their discretion.

The establishment of private social media groups for the purpose of communication with parents/carers is allowed and the club social media manager should be informed when a group is established and on what social media platform it is hosted.

2.5 Content

It is not acceptable to post, amongst others, items that may include reference to a person's ethnic origin, colour, race, nationality, faith, gender, sexual orientation or disability, and any member found to have posted such items will be subject to disciplinary action using the club disciplinary procedure.

Comments of this nature may attract civil or criminal action against the author(s). In addition, any abuse of match officials, opposition etc may be deemed by the RFU to bring the game into disrepute and lead to disciplinary sanctions against both the author and/or the Club.

All club members should be aware that comments which bring the game into disrepute, or are threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting, may lead to disciplinary action.

2.6 Cyber Bullying

All reports of cyber-bullying and other technology misuses reported to the club safeguarding officer, social media manager or any other club official will be investigated fully and may result in notification to the police where ARFC is obliged to do so. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to, suspension, or banning from membership of ARFC.

Members must be aware that in certain circumstances where a crime has been committed, they may be subject to a criminal investigation by the police over which ARFC will have no control.

2.7 General Guidance

Social media platforms are public forums, the expectation on all members posting in respect of ARFC is that they treat them as such.

Members of ARFC posting in respect of the club or its activities are expected to:

- Show respect to others, including other members of ARFC and the wider rugby community, and to act at all times within the core values of the game.
- Individuals and organisations are strictly responsible for any posting on their account(s).
- Respect the rights and confidentiality of others.
- Re-posting or re-tweeting inappropriate content represents an endorsement of that content and can be actionable.
- Do not use abusive, derogatory, vulgar or sexual language.
- Do not criticise or imply bias in match officials.
- At all times, exercise discretion and respect for clubs, players, fans and the game's partners.
- Deleting or apologising publicly for an improper posting does not prevent disciplinary action being taken.
- Consider "protecting" Tweets and changing security/visibility of social media accounts.

2.8 Do's and Don'ts

Club members should follow the general guidelines above and:

- Do show your personality and be approachable.
- Do share your achievements.
- Do let people know what it is like to be a player/official.
- Do post regular comments to grow and engage with an audience.
- Do report any content that you encounter that is in breach of this policy.

- Don't comment if you have any concerns about the consequences.
- Don't link to unsuitable content.
- Don't get into disputes with audience.
- Don't share or elicit personal detail.

2.9 Reporting

Any grievance, criticism or resentment should be directed in person to the individual or respective managers or coaches. Matters of a more serious or contentious nature should be discussed with the Club Committee, via the disciplinary officer.

3. Use of photos and video

The use of photos and videos of players under the age of 18 is only permitted if parental consent has been received by the parent or carer. If in doubt, do not share the image.

3.1 RFU Recommendations:

- Use group images, rather than individual images.
- For images of individual children (such as in action shots) where possible use models or illustrations.
- Only use images of children in suitable dress, to minimise the risk of inappropriate adaptation of the image
- If a child is named on the site, do not include an image (individual or group). If a child features in an image on the site, do not use the child's first name or last name, either in text on the site or in the image file name.

ARFC will abide by all RFU recommendations regarding photo and video images and will obtain consent from the appropriate responsible person(s) before using any images of children or vulnerable adults on its website.

Consent request clauses are included in the registration form which is completed each season and are available on TEAMO.

4. Club Guidelines communications with age groups

- All Age Group communications – for example fixture information, team selection – should be sent via email or WhatsApp group message.
- Messages using either email or WhatsApp should not be sent to a child unless the parent is also copied and has provided **EXPLICIT CONSENT**. Such emails should only come from age group coaches or administrators as communicated to parents. This should only happen with older children who may be responsible for their own travel to the club, this is the only justification for messaging a child and you must be able to evidence parental consent.
- Coaches can approach the social media manager to broadcast messages using club social media channels e.g. cancellations to fixtures.

5. GMS Policy

TBC

6. Grant Funding

Individual age groups cannot apply for grant funding from local or national schemes, charities or funds without discussion and approval with the club grants officer.

This is due to the individual age groups not being recognised organisations in their own right and being unable to meet the due diligence requirements required by some grant giving charities and funds.

It is also to ensure that the finite amounts of funding which are available are best used in the interests of developing the whole club for the benefit of the maximum number of members and to avoid duplication e.g. multiple age groups applying for the same fund.

The club grants officer is happy to discuss funding with any age group lead and may be able to assist in this process, please contact them to discuss any funding streams or funding proposals.

Grants Officer: Mark Bowles

Email: mark@thetrainingeffect.co.uk

Tel: 07527350160

7. Disclosure and barring service checks (DBS)

All volunteer coaches at ARFC are required to hold a valid DBS check. This will be arranged by, and paid for, by ARFC for individuals who do not have an existing valid DBS check which can be verified by ARFC.

If you already have a DBS and have signed up to the update service ARFC may be able to verify your DBS status without the need for a new DBS check.

8. Safeguarding

ARFC have a safeguarding policy that all coaches need to be familiar with, understand and conduct themselves in line with its principles and requirements.

The safeguarding policy is available to all coaches, members and parents, all coaches are required to read, agree to adhere to its content and guidance and sign to demonstrate said agreement to the policy at inception of role.

9. Speak Up Policy

ARFC support the RFU's speak up policy and encourage all coaches to raise concerns both internally within the club and through representatives at Kent RFU and the RFU where appropriate.

This is to ensure that any concerns about any unacceptable practice, behaviour, wrongdoing or misconduct are addressed and acted on in a timely and professional manner.

You can find the RFU speak up policy here - <https://www.englandrugby.com/about-rfu/rfu-policies/speak-up-policy>

10. Interviews

New coaches will be interviewed and appointed by the DOR and club safeguarding officer.

Appointment to the role of coach is subject to the meeting of the requirements set out in this policy including, but not limited to, obtaining a DBS and completing any required training.

Not completing these required elements within agreed timescales may result in your position of coach at ARFC being rescinded.

11. Agreement and understanding

I hereby state my agreement and understanding of the coach's policy and agree to adhere to the standards outlined therein.

Signed
ARFC Volunteer Coach.....

Name:

Signed
ARFC Director of Rugby.....

Name: