

Supporting 17 year olds in adult rugby

This guide helps you coordinate the approval process and support each player afterwards. The aim is a safe, positive transition that suits the player. Approval is an individual decision and must not be driven by a team needing players.

A 17-year-old remains a child for safeguarding purposes. Their wishes, welfare and development come first, and they can choose to stop adult rugby without pressure or penalty.

Before adult contact rugby begins

Complete these checks before the player trains or plays adult contact rugby. Submitting an application is not approval.

- Confirm the player has reached their 17th birthday. They must not train or play in the front row of a contested scrum while aged 17.
- Check that Hampshire RFU has approved the club for the relevant male and/or female adult rugby provision. Keep the club safeguarding arrangements, required personnel checks and training up to date.
- Ask the assessing coach to explain why adult rugby benefits this player and assess their physical readiness, skills, experience, maturity and proposed playing environment. Include the player's views and the required parent or carer consent.
- Complete the separate individual player application in GMS. It is reviewed by the Club Safeguarding Officer and then Hampshire RFU. Check confirmed approval and any conditions before participation.
- Complete the relevant adult player registration following approval and before adult matches. Make coaches and team managers aware of the approval, conditions and permitted positions.

Use the Hampshire RFU and RFU guides on page 3 for the full application requirements and GMS instructions. Plan ahead and avoid promising a first match until approval is confirmed.

Share the work

Suggested organisation: agree one named volunteer to coordinate the process. They bring the right people together; they do not take on every responsibility or make medical or safeguarding decisions alone.

Who	Main contribution
Club coordinator or registrar	Tracks approval and registration, arranges reviews and keeps a brief record.
Assessing and adult coaches	Assess suitability, plan participation, monitor load and respond to concerns.
Club Safeguarding Officer	Oversees safeguarding arrangements, reviews applications and escalates concerns.
Player and parent or carer	Share the player's wishes, other commitments and any welfare concerns.
Medical personnel and RugbySafe lead	Support injury management and appropriate medical advice when needed.

Agree a simple support plan

Before the first session, agree the following with the player, parent or carer, adult coach and CSO. A short note is sufficient; use existing club records where possible.

- Who the player can speak to, including someone outside the immediate selection decision.
- The intended team, position and initial training and match involvement, within the approval conditions.
- How adult rugby fits alongside age grade, school, college, academy and representative rugby, and education or work. Agree who will coordinate with other coaches where needed.
- Practical safeguarding arrangements for an under-18 in an adult setting, including changing and showering, travel and communications, in line with the RFU Safeguarding Policy.
- When the first review will happen and how the player can raise a concern or request a break.

Keep in touch during the season

Use short, regular conversations to check enjoyment, confidence, fatigue, injuries and wider pressures. Speak directly with the player and involve their parent or carer appropriately. The CSO should maintain active oversight.

Coaches should review total training and match involvement across all rugby settings, including recovery. Check applicable RFU age grade requirements and approval conditions; adult approval is not a reason to overlook cumulative load. Adjust participation when examinations, work, injury or other pressures increase.

Arrange recorded reviews after the first adult match, at mid-season and at the end of the season. Also review after significant injury, during increased educational or personal pressure, or whenever wellbeing, engagement or circumstances change. Use the prompts on page 3.

If a concern arises

Do not wait for the next scheduled review. Act if the player is uncomfortable, no longer wants to participate, appears unsafe or overloaded, sustains a significant or repeated injury, or shows reduced confidence, enjoyment or wellbeing.

- Listen to the player and record the concern. If they want to stop, respect that decision immediately.
- Pause adult participation where safety or welfare is in doubt, risk cannot be managed, medical advice requires it, or a safeguarding concern makes continued participation unsafe. Offer appropriate support while the concern is assessed.
- Involve the CSO promptly for safeguarding or welfare concerns. Follow RFU safeguarding reporting procedures; volunteers should not investigate safeguarding allegations themselves.
- Seek medical advice for injury concerns and follow the applicable concussion and return to rugby procedures. A welfare review does not provide medical clearance.
- Seek guidance from Hampshire RFU when suitability is disputed, injuries recur, safeguards are ineffective, a serious incident occurs, or approval may need to be reviewed, suspended or withdrawn.

The club can stop selecting or involving the player while it seeks advice. Hampshire RFU should be involved in any formal change to its approval. Record the action, who will follow up and what must happen before participation resumes.

Use one short review record

Use these prompts for scheduled reviews and reviews following a concern. Keep the discussion proportionate, give the player space to speak honestly and record decisions rather than a transcript.

Player _____ Club _____
 Review date _____ Review led by _____
 People contributing _____

Ask or check	Review prompts
Player voice	Are you enjoying adult rugby? Do you feel safe and supported? Do you want to continue or change anything?
Readiness and welfare	Coach observations on physical readiness, confidence and maturity; relevant injury or medical advice; any safeguarding concerns.
Total commitments	Adult and age grade match involvement, training elsewhere, recovery, education or work, and personal pressures.
Other feedback	Relevant parent or carer feedback and information from other coaches or medical personnel.
Decision and actions	Continue, adjust or pause participation. Record reasons, agreed changes, any escalation, action owner and follow-up date.

Decision and reasons _____

Action and owner _____

Next review date _____

Keep approval details, the support plan and brief review records securely, accessible only to those who need them. Share relevant information with the people implementing the agreed actions, in line with club data protection arrangements.

Finish the season and learn

Complete the Hampshire RFU end-of-season review with the player, coaches and parent or carer. Consider what helped the player, what should change and how the club can better support future transitions. Keep the outcome and provide it to Hampshire RFU when requested.

[Hampshire RFU end of season review questions](#)

Help and application guidance

[Hampshire RFU guidance and approval requirements](#)

[RFU club approval instructions in GMS](#)

[RFU individual player approval instructions in GMS](#)

[RFU Regulation 15](#)

For process queries contact admin@hampshirerfu.com. For safeguarding concerns, involve your CSO and follow RFU reporting procedures. Seek Hampshire RFU support early if you are unsure.

Hampshire RFU approval remains conditional on appropriate oversight and safeguards. Unmet expectations may affect further player or future club approvals. This guide supports the current RFU requirements and any individual approval conditions.