

Berkshire Rugby Union Referees Ltd (Operating as Berkshire Rugby Referees)



Founded 1948

RECRUITMENT & SAFEGUARDING REPORT - SEASON 2025/26

Safeguarding

Safeguarding activity this season has focused on strengthening processes, improving compliance, and ensuring that all referees—particularly those working with young people—remain fully supported and appropriately vetted.

A more robust system is now in place to identify referees whose DBS checks will expire within six months, allowing proactive renewal and reducing administrative risk. The introduction of both face-to-face and online DBS checks has increased flexibility. While the online option is significantly more efficient, it carries an additional £6 cost per check. Andrew Davis has completed all required training and is now fully qualified to conduct both online and in-person DBS checks. His contribution has been invaluable in maintaining compliance and reducing bottlenecks.

The majority of members continue to take safeguarding seriously and report concerns promptly. This vigilance must be maintained, as safeguarding remains a collective responsibility across the society and its partner clubs.

Young Match Officials (YMOs)

This season has seen encouraging progress among our young referees:

- Will Oakley has begun officiating senior games and has received positive reports from David Levy.
- Poppy Cooper has also stepped into senior fixtures and has been observed several times with promising feedback.

Justin Turrell and Colin Stonehouse at Rams RFC are looking to develop a structured YMO refereeing pathway aligned with RFU guidelines. I have suggested that BRR will be interested in being involved in their discussions. This collaboration aims to provide clarity, support, and progression opportunities for young officials.

A significant proportion of new referees come through Rams RFC, where many act as club referees. As most youth fixtures occur on Sundays, YMOs often balance playing commitments with refereeing opportunities. Managing this balance remains an ongoing challenge.

Club Referee Coordinators (CRefCs)

Engagement with CRefCs has been more limited this season. Many clubs either lack a formally appointed CRefC or have individuals covering the role alongside multiple other responsibilities. The prevailing view across clubs is that as long as age-grade fixtures are covered, they are satisfied, even if broader referee development is not prioritised.

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Referee Training Courses

Ready2Ref

The R2R replaced the ERRA as the RFU's Level 2 training course for referees this season, comprising several online modules and one face-to-face day. Courses are now requested, scheduled, & delivered locally, rather than being centrally coordinated by the RFU.

This season highlighted a key issue: clubs began requesting courses far too late, with the first course not taking place until December. This significantly reduced the opportunities for new referees to gain regular match experience during the season. Earlier scheduling will be essential next year.

A total of five courses were completed, with strong attendance:

- Reading RFC – 11 attendees (7 from Berkshire, 1 YMO)
- Rams RFC – 13 attendees (10 from Berkshire, 8 YMOs)
- Maidenhead RFC – 14 attendees (5 from Berkshire, 2 YMOs)
- Aldermaston RFC – 13 attendees (9 from Berkshire, 4 YMOs)
- Hungerford RFC – 14 attendees (11 from Berkshire, 5 YMOs)
- Bracknell RFC (closed course) – attendance data not provided, all from Berkshire

First Contact

Designed for coaches working with players new to the sport, this two-evening course includes a strong refereeing component. All courses were delivered in September and October, with over 60 candidates participating. Several attendees subsequently progressed to the Ready2Ref programme.

Summary and Priorities for Next Season

This season has seen meaningful progress in safeguarding, YMO development, and referee training, but also highlighted areas requiring renewed focus:

- Earlier scheduling of Ready2Ref courses to maximise referee development.
- Strengthening the CRefC network and encouraging formal appointments where possible.
- Supporting clubs with limited volunteer capacity.
- Retaining YMOs and ensuring they have balanced, sustainable opportunities.
- Continuing to improve safeguarding processes and maintaining high levels of vigilance.

The foundations are strong, and with continued collaboration across clubs, coordinators, and referees, the coming season offers significant potential for growth and consolidation.

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