

## **Experts call on Government to ban tackling in school rugby**

The UK and Irish governments should do more to protect school children from injury, including head trauma, while playing rugby.

As the Six Nations continues, over 70 academics, doctors, and public health professionals have sent an open letter to ministers, chief medical officers, and children's commissioners to request a ban of the collision elements of rugby within British school systems, so that children play touch and non-contact rugby.

- Rugby is a high-impact collision sport. Studies show that the risks of injuries for those aged under 18 years are high and injuries are often serious.
- Many secondary schools in the United Kingdom deliver contact rugby as a compulsory part of the physical education curriculum from age eleven.
- The majority of all injuries occur during contact or collision, such as the tackle and the scrum. These injuries, which include fractures, ligamentous tears, dislocated shoulders, spinal injuries, and head injuries, can have short-term, life-long, and life-ending consequences for children.

Evidence shows that there is a [28% risk of injury](#) for a child rugby player over a season of 15 games. The [risk of concussion](#) for a child or adolescent rugby union player over a season is 11% - that is the equivalent of one or two players sustaining a concussion every season in every school or club rugby team of 15 players.

Research also points to the tackle being a particular cause for concern. In youth rugby, tackles were found to be responsible for up to two thirds (64%) [of all injuries](#) and [87% of concussions](#). Meanwhile, rugby union is being taken into [750 state secondary schools](#) with the aim of reaching one million children.

Parents expect the state to look after their children when they are at school. Rugby is a high-impact collision sport and given that [children are more susceptible to injuries](#) such as concussion, the absence of injury surveillance systems and primary prevention strategies is worrying. Children are being left exposed to serious and catastrophic risk of injury.

As signatories to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UK and Irish governments should ensure the safety of rugby, by removing the contact from the children's game in schools.