



# **LIONS CARE PLAN**



**FEATHERSTONE LIONS  
GUIDE TO  
SAFEGUARGING CHILDREN**



# FEATHERSTONE LIONS

## ARLFC

Millpond Stadium  
Wakefield road  
Featherstone  
WF7 5HL  
Chairman Mr Clive Tennant  
Tel: 07939 215855  
Secretary Vicky Lunt

### Introduction

Sport can and does have a very powerful and positive influence on people – especially children. Not only can it provide opportunities for enjoyment and achievement; it can also develop valuable qualities such as self-esteem, leadership and teamwork. These positive effects can only take place if sport is in the right hands – in the hands of those who place the welfare of all children first and adopt practices that support, protect and empower them. The reality is that abuse, not only sexual abuse but physical and emotional abuse, as well as bullying, does take place in sport.

Featherstone Lions has put together this care plan to ensure the safety of our children and ensure all volunteers working within our club are here for the right reasons.

A physical copy of this plan will be given to all team managers while a digital copy will be made available to all volunteers on our website

[www.featherstonelions.co.uk/safeguarding](http://www.featherstonelions.co.uk/safeguarding)

This plan is a source of reference and includes all our policies and all information required to ensure all staff, volunteers, parents, and spectators conduct themselves correctly and keep the children at the club safe.



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## Safeguarding Policy

Here at Featherstone Lions, we understand that parents and guardians place a great deal of trust in our coaches and volunteers.

All of our coaches, assistants and volunteers are recruited in line with our safer recruitment policy and are DBS checked - this is to the same standard as Teachers and other Childcare Professionals.

These DBS checks are mandatory for anyone wishing to volunteer to work with children within the club and is a sign of our commitment to providing a safe environment for your child.

Featherstone Lions Rugby League Club acknowledges its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of every child, young person and vulnerable adult who has been entrusted to its care and is committed to working to provide a safe environment for all of its members. A child or young person is anyone under the age of 18 involved in any club football activity. A vulnerable adult is anyone who may be unable to take care of himself or herself or be unable to protect himself or herself against significant harm or exploitation. Featherstone Lions ARLFC has adopted the Rugby League Safeguarding Policy revision 2022 and are implementing it throughout the club.

A copy of the full formal document 'Rugby League safeguarding Policy' is held by the Club Child Welfare Officers and is available upon request.

Or can be downloaded from our website [www.featherstonelions.co.uk](http://www.featherstonelions.co.uk)

We ask all visitors, players, coaches and volunteers adhere to their appropriate code of conduct.

Here at Featherstone Lions we operate a no bullying policy and encourage everyone to 'Speak Out' about any concerns within our club.

Our Child Welfare Officers can be contacted directly

Lions - [\\_Leecowdell@googlemail.com](mailto:_Leecowdell@googlemail.com) 07934700633

Lionesses - [catherinebell@sky.com](mailto:catherinebell@sky.com) 07551513557



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### **The key principles of the RFL Safeguarding Policy are that: –**

The child's welfare is, and must always be, the paramount consideration – All children, young people and vulnerable adults have a right to be protected from abuse regardless of their age, ethnic origin, gender, special needs, disability, class or social background, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, colour or political persuasion. – All suspicions and allegations of abuse or poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately

We acknowledge that every child or young person or vulnerable adult who plays or participates in rugby league should be able to take part in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from poor practice and abuse. This is the responsibility of every adult involved in our club.

Featherstone Lions Rugby League Club has a role to play in safeguarding the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults by protecting them from physical, sexual or emotional harm and from neglect or bullying. It is noted and accepted that the RFL Safeguarding Policy and related regulations applies to everybody in rugby league whether in a paid or voluntary capacity. This means whether you are a volunteer, match official, helper, coach, club official or medical staff.

5 We endorse and adopt the RFL's Safeguarding Policy on recruiting volunteers and staff and will follow the recruitment procedures as set out in that policy and summarised below:

- Develop a job description or role profile
- As a minimum meet and chat with applicants and where possible conduct interviews before appointing
- Request and follow up two references before appointing
- Apply for an RFL DBS Enhanced Disclosure where appropriate in line with RFL policy

All current Featherstone Lions Rugby League Club members with direct access to children, young people and vulnerable adults will be required to complete a DBS Enhanced disclosure via the RFL DBS unit

It is accepted that the RFL aims to prevent people with a history relevant and significant offending from having contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults and prevent them having the opportunity to influence policies or practice with children or young people. This is to prevent direct sexual or physical harm to children or young people or vulnerable adults and to minimise the risk of grooming within rugby league.

Featherstone Lions Rugby League Club promotes its own speak out policy in line with the RFL's Whistle Blowing Policy. Any adult or young person with concerns about a colleague can speak out without fear of repercussion by contacting the clubs welfare officers.



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Featherstone Lions Rugby League Club has appointed a Club Welfare Officer (CWO) in line with the RFL's role profile. The CWO will take part in training as defined in the RFL's Safeguarding Education and Training Strategy. The CWO is the first point of contact for all club members and parents/carers regarding concerns for the welfare of any child or young person or vulnerable adult. The CWO will be familiar with the procedures for referring any concerns and will play a proactive role in increasing an awareness of poor practice and abuse amongst club members.

We acknowledge and endorse the RFL's Anti Bullying Policy. Bullying of any kind is not acceptable at our club. If bullying does occur, all players or parents/carers should be able to tell and to know that bullying will be dealt with promptly. Incidents need to be reported to the CWO and in the case of serious bullying or adult on child bullying to the RFL Safeguarding Team.

The RESPECT Enjoy the Game Code of Conduct for coaches, players, officials, parents/carers, officials and coaches has been implemented by Featherstone Lions Rugby League Club.

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## Safeguarding Children

### Safer Recruitment Policy

Featherstone Lions is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children at our club. To aid this all volunteers or employees who work regularly with or around children must be recruited in line with our safer recruitment Policy which fulfils the RFL requirements on safer recruitment.

#### **Planning**

Draw up a job description, person specification and minimum requirements, e.g. Rugby League Coaching Level 2, Licenced Coach, First Aid Certificate, SPC.

#### **Advertising**

Advertise locally or online for the position, Adverts must state Job Description and Person Specification. Adverts must state that a clear recruitment process (including DBS checks) will be followed.

#### **Interview**

Applicants will be Interviewed Informally at the club house by a minimum of two people, ideally including a club official. The interview enables the Club to verify any information by checking identification documents, driving licence etc. It is at this interview that you can decide whether the applicant demonstrates the qualities that we want in our club.

#### **References**

Featherstone Lions will always seek at least 2 references before making a recruitment decision. Ideally one reference should be from paid employment or education and the other reference should be in a sporting capacity, ideally in a role similar to the one they are applying for. The applicant will also be asked to complete a self-declaration and disclosure form.

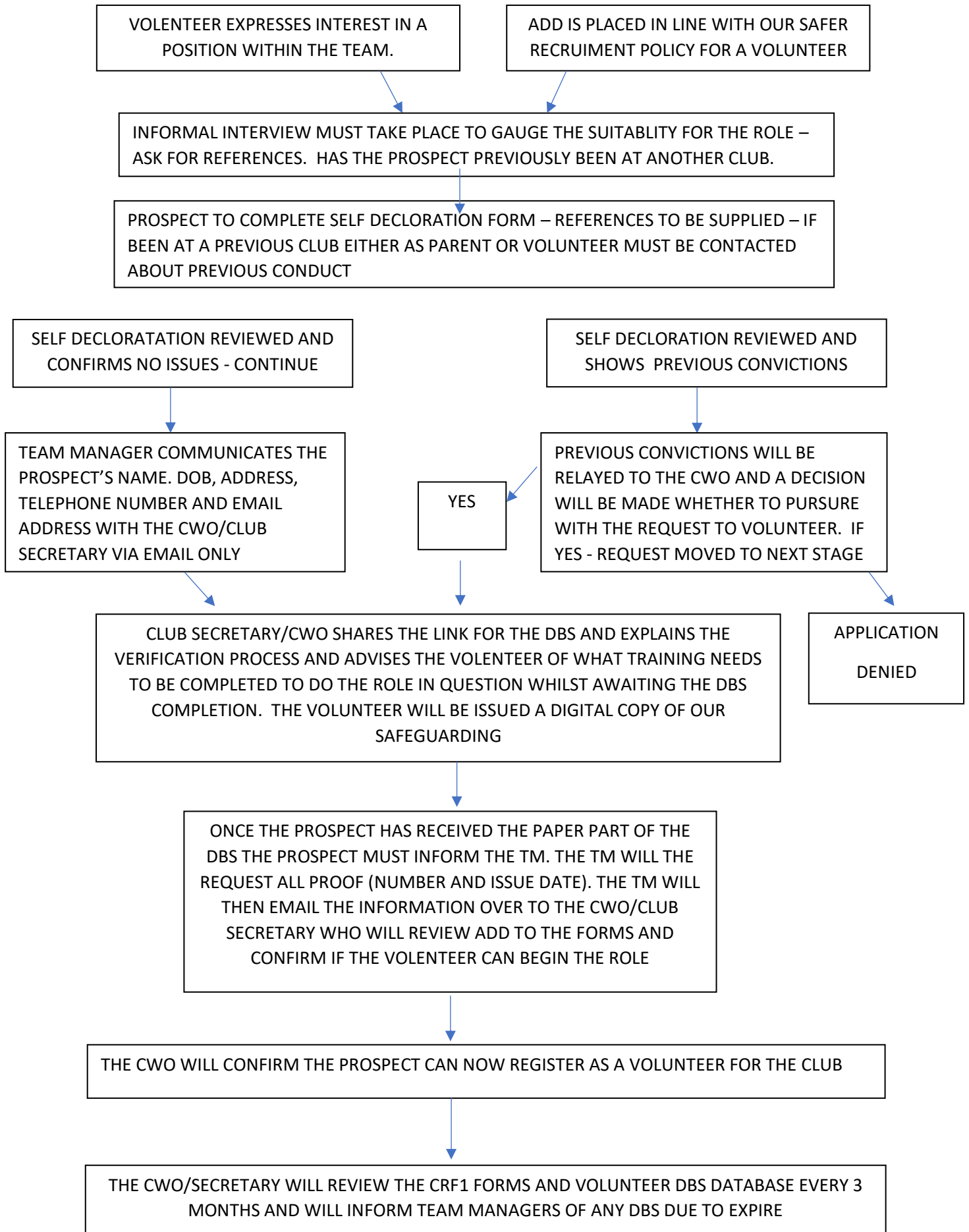
#### **DBS Check**

If applicants are to be in a regulated activity with children they will be asked to complete a RFL / Featherstone Lions DBS check, (even if they already have an up to date RFL DBS) and return this to the RFL for processing. Upon receipt of the DBS Disclosure, the RFL will make a decision on whether or not there is any reason to prevent that individual working within Rugby League.

#### **Induction**

New volunteers should be introduced to the RFL's Safeguarding & Protecting Children Policy, the Club's Safeguarding & Protecting Children Policy and any other policies the Club deems are necessary and this should be done by the Club Welfare Officer. New Volunteers will not be allowed to work alone with children until receipt of their DBS from the RFL

# SAFER RECRUITMENT OF VOLUNTEERS





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### Self-declaration and Disclosure form

For regulated activity roles eligible for a DBS, that involve contact with children under 18 years old

#### Private and Confidential

All information will be treated as confidential and managed in accordance with relevant data protection legislation and guidance. You have a right of access to information held on you under the Data Protection Act 2018.

#### Volunteer / Employee Information

Name of candidate/person:	
Previous name(s): Please include date(s) each name was used (MM/YYYY)	
Address with postcode:	
Telephone/mobile number:	
Date of birth:	
Gender:	

#### Role Applying For

Coach	<input type="checkbox"/>
First Aider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Team Manager	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other – Please State	

**Note:** As the position you have applied for involves work with children and young people it is not covered by the provisions in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. When answering questions 1 to 4 you must declare criminal convictions and/or cautions that are not 'protected' under the Exceptions Order (as amended). This includes UK, overseas and armed forces convictions, cautions and relevant service discipline convictions where it would be considered an equivalent offence in England and Wales.



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Declaration for Volunteer / Employee	
Have you ever been known to any Children's Services department or Police as being a risk or potential risk to children?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please provide further information:	
Have you been the subject of any investigation and/or sanction by any organisation or body due to concerns about your behaviour towards children?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please provide further information and provide details of the outcome:	
Have you ever been the subject of disciplinary sanctions or been asked to leave employment or voluntary activity due to inappropriate behaviour towards children?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please provide further information:	
Do you have any adult cautions (simple or conditional) or spent convictions that are not protected as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2020?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please provide further information:	
Do you have any overseas convictions?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please provide further information:	



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### Confirmation of Declaration

<input type="checkbox"/>	I agree that the information provided here may be processed in connection with recruitment purposes and I understand that an offer of role may be withdrawn or disciplinary action may be taken if information is not disclosed by me and subsequently come to the organisation's attention.
<input type="checkbox"/>	In accordance with the organisation's procedures if required I agree to provide a valid criminal record certificate and consent to the organisation clarifying any information provided on the disclosure with the agencies providing it.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I agree to inform the organisation within 24 hours if I am subsequently investigated by any agency or organisation in relation to concerns about my behaviour towards children or young people.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I understand that the information contained on this form, the results of the DBS check and information supplied by third parties may be supplied by the organisation to other persons or organisations in circumstances where this is considered necessary to safeguard children.
Signature of Volunteer	
Print name:	
Date:	



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### Recruitment Checklist

Name of volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ Position Applied \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewed Prospect Volunteer

Prospect Completed Self Disclosure Form

Obtained References

Seen proof of Qualifications if any, eg  
First Aid, Coaching badge etc

Applied for DBS

ID Checks Compete (3 forms of ID + DBS  
reference to be sent to Chris Spur)

DBS Returned Issue date sent to Welfare  
Officer

Registered on LeagueNet

Code of Conduct Signed

Safeguarding Induction Done

Sign Name \_\_\_\_\_

Print name \_\_\_\_\_

To be signed by Team Official – Team Manager / Coach

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### Disclosure and Barring Service – DBS

All volunteers at our club must be DBS checked inline with the RFL's safeguarding policy.

When all prechecks have been completed any volunteer must apply for a DBS

**FEATHERSTONE LIONS WILL REQUEST A DBS APPLICATION FOR ALL NEW VOLUNTEERS  
EVEN IF THEY HOLD A CURRENT IN DATE RFL DBS**

The application is easy and free of charge.

Applications can be done online at the following address

<https://disclosure.capitarvs.co.uk/rfl/>

Anyone applying for a DBS must use our club details;

**YFEVLIONS**

**Rfl123**

When complete the resulting reference number should be given to the team manager who can record this and pass it on to the CWO

To process the application further 3 forms of ID including 1 photo ID must be sent to Chris Spur to verify Identification.

The DBS will be reviewed by the RFL and returned to the applicant if no issues arise. The DBS number and date issued must be forwarded to the CWO

- Please note a DBS last 3 years, then the process has to be repeated including the ID verification.



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### Team Roles and Required Qualifications

#### All Volunteers should have:-

- Responsibility for creating an enjoyable environment for all children and young people in their team
- Understanding that they are a role model to players
- An obligation to encourage a healthy lifestyle
- To recognise bullying and to address this or to seek further guidance
- An understanding of what to report and who to report to

#### A team must consist of the following staff members

2 x qualified coaches

1 Team manager

1 Game day manager

1 First Aider

#### Required Qualifications

<b>Coach</b>
<b>Level one - Children up to age 12</b>
<b>Level two – Children 12+</b>
<b>Safeguarding Children</b>

<b>Game day manager</b>
<b>RFL Online game day manager course</b>

<b>First Aider</b>
<b>RFL Approved 3 day First Aid Certificate</b>
<b>RFL Online Concussion Course</b>

Please note Volunteers can take on multiple roles but on match days only the Team Manager / First Aider and Team Manager / GDM roles can be combined. A coach or GDM cannot be registered to be first aider on match days.



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## Yorkshire Junior & Youth Team Manager roles and responsibilities 2022

All Team Managers should have a copy of the relevant rules and a working knowledge of the constitution.

1. On the arrival of both teams for the matchday fixture both Team Managers should make contact with each other as soon as is possible.
2. Confirm whether a video or camera will be used by anyone from their clubs and if so that they have been officially appointed by them and both clubs agree with this to take place. Please note that unless the club has had prior permission from the RFL on safeguarding grounds for the game not to be recorded an objection cannot be enforced on the day of the game.
3. The **home** Team Manager must make sure the Matchday Information Sheet (MIS) has been fully completed including players, technical area officials and print only their name at the bottom for reference and then pass this onto the visiting Team Manager to do the same, once all details have been completed then return this to the home Team Manager.
4. Completing the Matchday Information Sheet. Ensure you put BOTH team names, the age group, date and whether it is cup/league/friendly then print all your players names against their corresponding shirt number - this will aid the official for identification and the wrong players are not sent off or reported. Please write clearly in BLOCK CAPITALS.
5. Once completed the Matchday Information Sheet should be checked against the players ID whilst doing the ID card check to make sure the names on the Matchday Information Sheet correspond with the ID cards, this MUST be done before the kick off.
6. Please note that should no ID cards be available or a team has no GDM, Coach or First Aider the game cannot commence and will be awarded 18-0 to the opposition unless an agreement to play the game in the next 5 days by both teams is agreed (if there is a First Aider present who agrees to do both teams, the game can go ahead. Friendly games by the teams on the day are not allowed.
7. Should a matchday official request the name of anyone connected to your club this includes players and officials and any friends or relatives within your club then that name must be given (if known) immediately, if not known then the name of the person must be found out and submitted to the official asap.
8. Once the game has finished both Team Managers must meet and complete the matchday information sheet with the Matchday official and get the Matchday official to confirm the score. It is at this point both Team Managers should sign the form.
9. Any club official reported for trying to influence the official's decision on sending in reports will be reported to discipline
10. The home Team Manager is responsible for sending in the Matchday Information Sheet to the relevant Fixture Secretary

Due to the amount of abuse that is happening on our touchlines the League have a two point warning. If a team within your club is reported for any form of abuse and found guilty the club will also receive a warning on top of what the individual or team has received. Should another case of abuse within your club be reported and found guilty then a final warning will be issued. Should a third report of abuse be found guilty then the club will be fined £250 Please ensure your club/teams are made aware of this penalty!



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### FEATHERSTONE LIONS TEAM MANAGER EXPECTATIONS

1. The TM – Team Manager is responsible for the management of all Volunteers, Parent's and children of the team.
2. TM – Communicates all prospect volunteers with the CWO/Club secretary at all times.
3. TM – To ensure all volunteers have following the guidelines provided when becoming a volunteer.
4. TM – To ensure ALL active volunteers always have up to date training and certificates in place.
5. TM – To communicate all game day concerns, incidents, Serious injury and concussion concerns with the Club secretary/CWO via EMAIL only so a clear trail of communication can be established.
6. TM – To ensure no persons/person are involved in the game day action without the appropriate verification.
7. TM – CR1 Form related. The TM will be provided with a list of volunteers, what is required to be renewed, and who needs to provide certificated or complete forms etc. The TM will the communicate with His/her volunteers and ensure the information is collated on the list provided and sent in BULK all the team together with all evidence of certificated requested and sent via EMAIL ONLY to the CWO/Club secretary. Please avoid sending one by one certificates and evidence this is time restricted and will cause significant delays.
8. TM – Any TM found to be deliberately and intentionally breaching the clear guidelines will be brought before the committee and a formal meeting will take place, depending on the severity the TM may be asked to step down from the position.

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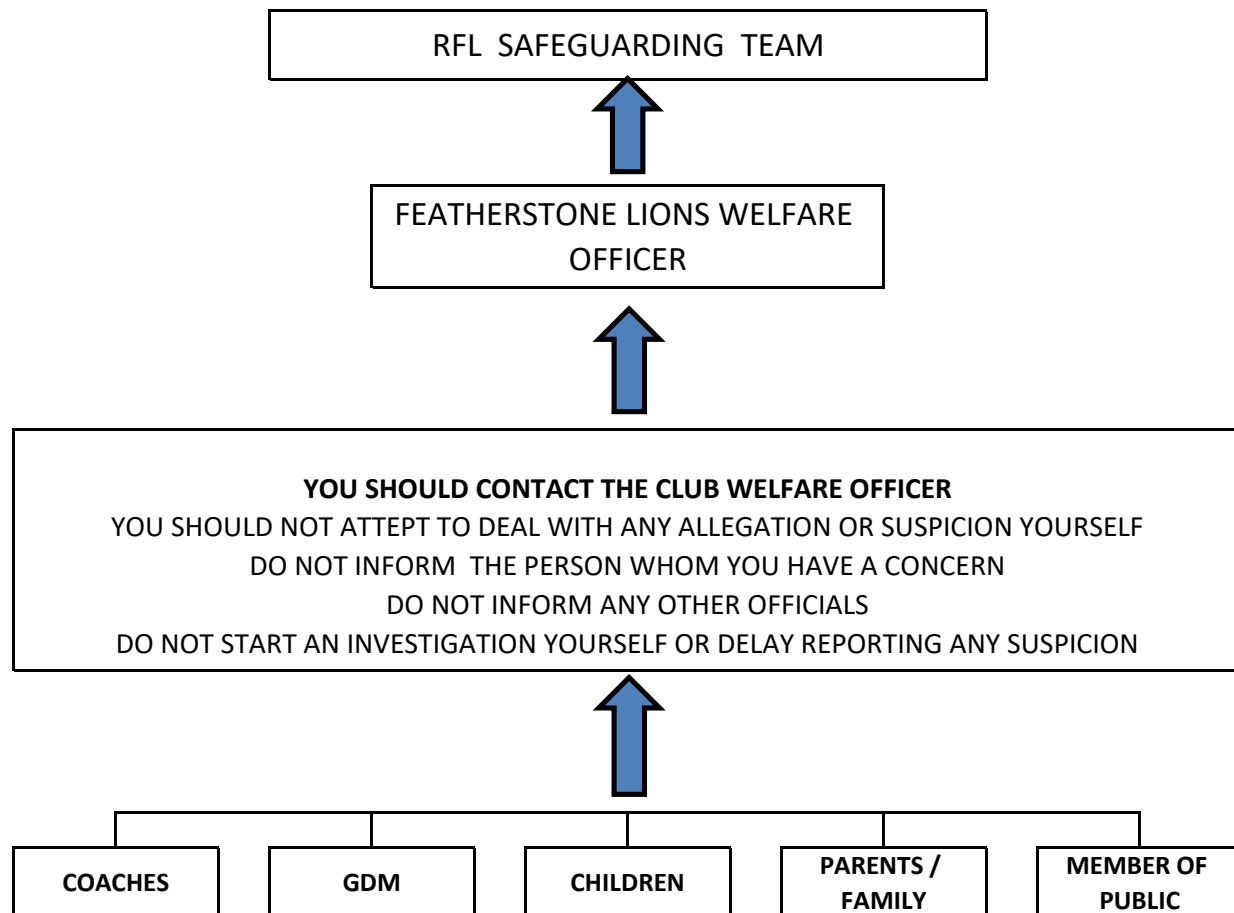
# FEATHERSTONE LIONS SPEAK OUT POLICY

Featherstone Lions are committed to developing a culture where it is safe and acceptable for everyone involved at the club to raise concerns about any unacceptable practice, behaviour, wrong doing or misconduct.

We understand that through loyalty or fear of repercussion people may be reluctant to voice their concerns

This policy has been created in line with the RFL's Whistle Blowing Policy to encourage members of our club to speak out, knowing that they will be supported and their concerns will be handled sensitively and confidentially.

Speaking out will enable concerns to be investigated and dealt with for the benefit of all involved



## How to Speak Out

Above is the reporting procedure for raising concerns. Please contact the club welfare Officer. A Cause for Concern Form should be completed regarding any concerns relating to the behaviour of any child or adult involved in or spectating at our club. These may include general concerns about a child's welfare, concerns about bullying or poor practice, suspicions or allegations of misconduct, or allegations of abuse

A cause for concern form can be obtained from the Team Manager or downloaded from our website

**[www.featherstonelions.co.uk/safeguarding](http://www.featherstonelions.co.uk/safeguarding)**

Anyone making a disclosure can be confident that the matter will be handled appropriately and with an appropriate level of confidentiality.

**Cause for concern form / record of safeguarding interventions by League and Club Welfare Officers**

**Date:** October 2020

**Version No** 1

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**Section A:**

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Date of birth:**

**Name of club and age group:**

**Name of welfare officer completing the form:**

**Date of issue/incident that has caused concern:**

**Date form completed:**

**Details of Parent/ carer:**

**Concern in relation to** *(please tick)*

**adult**

**child**

**both**

*which links with child protection plans when there are concerns about neglect)*

## Section B: Nature of Concern

(Please tick relevant issue that has led to the cause for concern)

Risk to self

Risk to others

Risk from others

### Is the concern:

Allegation

Poor Practice

Disclosure

### Nature of the concern:

Breach of confidentiality/other data protection breach  Child exploitation   
(inc. criminal & sexual)

Conditions in the home  Cyber/on-line bullying  Drug dealing

Grooming  Hate crime  Knife/other weapon crime

Overdose  Self-harm  Self neglect

Substance misuse  Low Mood  Trafficking

Other (please specify)

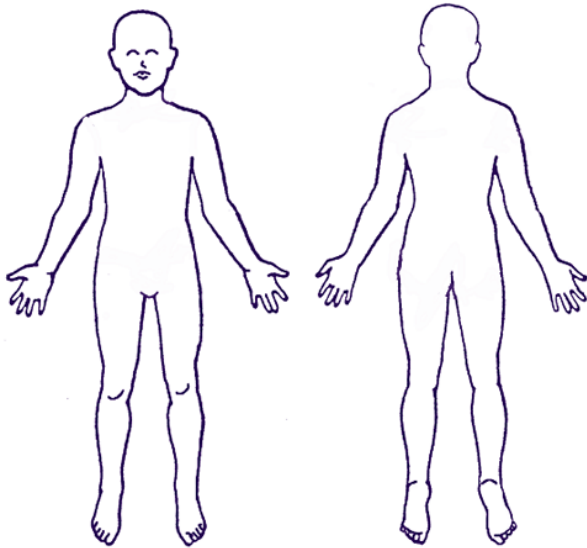
**NOTE: Please refer to the RFL Safeguarding Policy to ensure any concerns which must be reported to the RFL Safeguarding Manager are done so promptly.**



## Section C: Brief details about the incident/concern/allegation

*Please use the body diagram to indicate any area(s) of injury or mark(s) seen.*

*(To indicate on the body diagram where any areas of injury or marks have been seen; please use 'insert text box' on the diagram and then use this to indicate the injury or mark. The inserted text box can be shaded in using 'Format tab' and selecting 'Shape fill' whilst the computer cursor is on the text box).*



**Any witnesses to incident:**

## Section D: Details of action taken/planned

### Referral made/to be made:

Refer to  
Safeguarding manager

Date  
referred

Safeguarding  
case no  
*(if known)*

## Section E: Making safeguarding personal

**What would the individual/ family like to see as the outcome as a result of the safeguarding alert being made?** (i.e. difference wanted/desired)

*What does the person (adult/child at risk/that you are raising the concern about) want to happen or the outcome to be (if known), please give details of their wishes. Please remember, this is not about your views, but the young persons or parent/ carers own.*

**What else needs to be done to keep the child / young person/ vulnerable adult safe?**

**What is the child / young person/ vulnerable adult saying to you about their experience / the situation & the impact that it is having on them? What do they want to see change?**

*This aspect helps you to capture the voice of the child / young person/ vulnerable adult & things from their perspective.*

## **Section F: Comments and Follow up**

**Comments by League Welfare Officer including additional action required**

**League Welfare Officer Name**

**Date:**

**Comments by Safeguarding Manager including additional action that may be required**

**Safeguarding Manager Name:**

**Date:**

**Section G: Outcome of interventions, including any meetings relating to the concern**

*Please send updated form to the Safeguarding Manager Kerry Simmons at [kerry.simmons@rfl.co.uk](mailto:kerry.simmons@rfl.co.uk)*

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### ANTI Bullying Policy

Here at Featherstone Lions we are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all participants so they can participate in Rugby League in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable. If bullying does occur, all players, parents/guardians, volunteers and coaches should be able to speak out and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

In line with our speak out policy anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to speak to the relevant Team Manager, the Club Welfare Officer or any committee member.

What is bullying?

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

Bullying can be: -

- Emotional being unfriendly, excluding individuals deliberately, tormenting, e.g. hiding kit, threatening gestures)
- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Cyber All areas of internet, such as email, internet chat rooms, message boards, instant messenger services. Also includes misuse of cameras, video cameras or mobile phones, e.g. text messages.

Why is it important to Report bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Individuals who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving. All Rugby League Clubs have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

All individuals involved in Rugby League have a responsibility to report any issues of bullying to the Club Welfare Officer or another appropriate person.

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### Changing Room Policy

**Players should be supervised at all times in the dressing rooms by two(2) members of staff who have current enhanced DBS disclosures.**

- Adult staff (e.g. coaches, physios, match officials, other volunteers) should not change or shower at the same time using the same facility as players.**
- If you are involved in a mixed gender team, separate facilities should be made available for each gender and each group should be supervised by staff of the same gender.**
- Volunteers should not offer to do tasks of a personal nature which a young person could do for themselves unless requested to do so by a parent/guardian, although, please note that some young people may need assistance with tying laces, fitting head guards etc)**
- Parents do not have an automatic right to be present in the dressing room.**
- If a young person is uncomfortable changing or showering in public no pressure should be placed on them to do so. Encourage them to do this at home.**
- If your club has players with disabilities involve them and their carers in deciding how they should be assisted and ensure they are able to consent to the assistance that is offered.**
- Any staff, medical or otherwise, of the opposite gender to the team, for example, a female physio working with a male team, must not be present in the dressing rooms whilst players are getting showered or changed.**
- No photographic equipment should be allowed in the changing room environment. This includes cameras, video cameras, mobile phones with photographic capabilities etc.**

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## RECORDING IMAGES OF CHILDREN

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In general the RFL believes that recording images of children's involvement in Rugby League whether as photographs or DVDs can be beneficial. In order to ensure that the potential for any misuse of images is minimised, however, it is important that this policy is followed.

### CONCERNS ABOUT RECORDING IMAGES

In order to understand the reasons for the various rules and restrictions relating to the recording of images it is important to understand how they can be misused.

The key concerns regarding the use of images of children are:

- People taking inappropriate photographs or recorded images of children
- The possible identification of children when a photograph is accompanied by inappropriate information - in particular this can be used to give credence to a stranger pretending that they know a child with a view to abduction or grooming or may allow an estranged parent to track down children in contravention to a court order
- The inappropriate use, adaptation or copying of images for use on websites showing child abuse images.

### BENEFITS OF RECORDING IMAGES

The RFL believes that the benefits of recording images in a responsible manner outweighs the potential concerns and would recommend that parents/guardians agree to the images of their child being recorded within the terms of this policy.



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Secretary Vicky Lunt

### **Match DVDs**

The RFL believes that the recording of matches has many benefits for children in particular:

- DVDs are an invaluable coaching aid and are used as such extensively in the professional game
- DVDs promote an effective and fair on field disciplinary process
- Recorded evidence can provide key evidence in cases of alleged breaches of this Safeguarding Policy and/or the RESPECT code of conduct
- Providing family mementoes

### **Team/Player Photographs**

The RFL believes that photographs of teams and players provide many benefits for children and the sport in particular:

- Promoting positive images of children playing Rugby League
- Recording significant events both for clubs and for individual children
- Produce a record and sense of history for a club
- Providing mementoes for families In order for the recording of these images to be used to deliver these benefits it is important that the concerns are understood and acted upon by following the guidelines set out below.

### **RECORDING IMAGES GUIDELINES**

- Ensure Parents/Guardians/children have given their informed consent for the taking and publication of photographic images and have signed and returned the Player Profile form.



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- Ensure all children are appropriately dressed for the activity taking place which in the vast majority of cases will mean full playing kit.
- Any photographs or recording should focus on the activity rather than a particular child
- Personal details which may make a child vulnerable such as their address should never be revealed.
- If a player is named avoid using their photograph
- if a photograph is used avoid naming the player
- newspapers may use full names sometimes operating under the Press Complaints regulations Rugby League Club recording images of children policy
- In line with the RFL's Equality & Diversity policy photographs and recordings should represent the diverse range of children participating in Rugby League.
- Anyone taking photographs at an event must have a valid reason for doing so and must have completed a Recording of Images form.
- Any concerns about inappropriate or intrusive photography should be reported to the RFL Safeguarding team.
- The use of mobile phone or other cameras is forbidden in the dressing room

### **GUIDELINES TO BE FOLLOWED BY THE MEDIA OR OTHERS WHEN TAKING PHOTOS AT EVENTS**

- Anybody who wants to take photographs or otherwise record images must have a valid reason for doing so ie has a child taking part or is a club official photographer or media



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- The photographer/camera person should make themselves known to the organiser or person in charge prior to taking any images
- The photographer/camera person must sign the RFL Recording of Images form
- The photographer/camera person must have bona fide ID and be able to produce it on request
- Clubs or organisers must never allow photographers to have unsupervised access to players or to have one-to-one photo sessions at events

### **HOW TO DEAL WITH SOMEONE WHO IS RECORDING IMAGES & HAS NOT SOUGHT PERMISSION**

There will be occasions from time to time when someone you do not recognise who has not signed a Recording Images form who will be taking photographs or recording images at a Rugby League event. If this situation arises you should have the confidence and courage to challenge the individuals.

You should:

- Approach the individual & check who they are
- If they have not signed a Recording Images form ask them to stop recording
- If an individual is observed taking photographic images in a way that raises concerns or is 'suspicious' and does not desist when challenged, the Police should be informed

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### **Coaches Code of Conduct**

**BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL**

**REINFORCE THE COMPETITION RULES WITH YOUR PLAYERS  
AND STAFF**

**DISCOURAGE FOUL PLAY BY YOUR PLAYERS AND STAFF**

**CREATE A SAFE AND FAIR ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL PLAYERS,  
STAFF AND SPECTATORS**

**RESPECT THE MATCH OFFICIALS**

**TREAT OTHERS WITH RESPECT AND DO NOT DISCRIMINATE**

**PROVIDE ALL PLAYERS WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO  
DEVELOP**

**ALWAYS CONSIDER THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE OF  
ALL PLAYERS, STAFF AND SPECTATORS**





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## **Parents / Spectators Code of Conduct**

**BE A GOOD ROLE**

**MODEL RESPECT THE MATCH OFFICIALS**

**DO NOT ENGAGE IN DISCRIMINATORY OR THREATENING  
BEHAVIOUR**

**ENCOURAGE A SAFE AND FAIR ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL PLAYERS,  
MATCH OFFICIALS AND SPECTATORS**

**USE POSITIVE LANGUAGE WHATEVER THE SCORE**

**REPORT ANY INSTANCES OF DISCRIMINATORY OR THREATENING  
BEHAVIOUR TO THE NEAREST STEWARD OR THE GAME DAY  
MANAGER**

**MOST OF ALL, ENJOY THE MATCH AND OUR SPORT**



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Secretary Vicky Lunt

### **Players Code of Conduct**

**BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL**

**PLAY FAIR AT ALL TIMES**

**RESPECT THE MATCH OFFICIALS**

**ABIDE BY THE RULES TREAT OTHERS WITH RESPECT AND DO  
NOT DISCRIMINATE**

**SAFEGUARD YOUR HEALTH**

**DON'T USE ILLEGAL OR UNHEALTHY SUBSTANCES AIM TO  
GET BETTER**

**EVERY WEEK ENJOY PLAYING YOUR SPORT**

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## Listening Sessions

Throughout each season the club will carry out listening sessions for each squad of junior players.

### Why Carry out these sessions

Children come to play Rugby at our Club in a fun and safe environment

We want to know if they feel safe at the club

We want them to stay at our club

We want to know how the children feel about our club

We want to know if they have any concerns

### Who will carry Out these sessions

Our Club welfare officers will carry out these sessions

### What Will be asked

The children will be asked simple questions such as:-

What do you like about the club

Do you like training

Is there anything the club could improve

### When will the sessions take Place

The club welfare officers will contact the team manager to arrange sessions

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**LAST REVIEW DATE JANUARY 2021**  
**NEXT REVIEW DATE JANUARY 2023**

## **SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

Every effort has been made by the RFL to ensure the accuracy of this information at the time of publication. This Policy is binding and forms part of the RFL Operational Rules. For guidance the reader is advised to contact the RFL Safeguarding team or take further advice if necessary. Where a synopsis of the Operational Rules is given the full Operational Rules as published by the RFL from time to time take precedence.

### **Acknowledgements**

The RFL would like to thank the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) for their support and guidance. Special thanks also to the other sports whose work in this field has been a valuable source of information and inspiration.

Issued by the RFL January 2022.

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### **CONTACT DETAILS**

#### **RFL SAFEGUARDING TEAM**

[safeguarding@rfl.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@rfl.co.uk)

RFL Safeguarding Manager – [kerry.simmons@rfl.co.uk](mailto:kerry.simmons@rfl.co.uk) 07595 520610

#### **CPSU**

0116 366 5590 0116 366 5495

[cpsu@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:cpsu@nspcc.org.uk)  
[www.thecpsu.org.uk](http://www.thecpsu.org.uk)

#### **NSPCC**

Child Protection Helpline - 0800 800 5000

### **INTRODUCTION**

Sport can and does have a very powerful and positive influence on people – especially children. Not only can it provide opportunities for enjoyment and achievement; it can also develop valuable qualities such as self-esteem, leadership and teamwork. These positive effects can only take place if sport is in the right hands – in the hands of those who place the welfare of all children first and adopt practices that support, protect and empower them.

The reality is that abuse, not only sexual abuse but physical and emotional abuse, as well as bullying, does take place in sport; and in some cases, coaches and other trusted adults in sport including Rugby League have been convicted of such offences through the courts or found guilty of Misconduct by the RFL.

The RFL is committed to working in partnership with all agencies to ensure that information and training opportunities are available to ensure and promote best practice when working with children. Adopting best practice will help to safeguard these participants from potential abuse as well as preventing any unfounded allegations of abuse being made against coaches and other adults in

positions of responsibility. The RFL Safeguarding Policy allows children to excel in a safe environment and transmit a reassuring signal to parents that positively impacts on participation.

This document is binding for the game as a whole to everyone in Rugby League, whether involved in either a professional or voluntary capacity or as a parent, spectator or participant.

Everyone in Rugby League has a duty of care towards children and other vulnerable players and officials and must help to protect them from abuse.

## **1 SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

### **1.1 INCORPORATION**

The RFL Safeguarding Policy and associated policies and procedures have been adopted by the whole game. All individuals involved in Rugby League in England and those from outside England that participate in a Competition that fall under the jurisdiction of the RFL at every level, including but not limited to players, match officials, coaches, administrators, club officials, parents, agents and spectators are all bound to abide by this Policy, by the RESPECT Code of Conduct, by the Tackle It Policy, by the Rugby League Coaches' Code of Conduct and by any other applicable Code of Conduct published by the RFL. All such individuals by participating or being involved in Rugby League are deemed to have assented to and as such recognise and adhere to the principles and responsibilities embodied in this Policy & the Codes.

### **1.2 RFL SAFEGUARDING POLICY STATEMENT**

**The RFL recognises and embraces its responsibility to safeguard children and sets out this commitment below:**

- 1.2.1 The RFL mandates that it is the responsibility of every adult involved in rugby league to ensure that every child who plays or otherwise participates in Rugby League should be able to take part in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from abuse.
- 1.2.2 The RFL recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children involved in the game by protecting them from physical, emotional or sexual harm and from neglect or bullying as far as is possible.
- 1.2.3 The RFL is committed to working to provide a safe environment for all children to participate in the sport to the best of their abilities for as long as they choose to do so.
- 1.2.4 The RFL recognises that all children have a right to be protected from abuse irrespective of their age, gender, culture, disability, race, faith, religious belief, sexual orientation, all other protected characteristics and any other physical or other characteristic.
- 1.2.5 The RFL believes that the child's welfare is paramount and will be put before other considerations such as winning matches or the success and achievement of adults or clubs or representative teams.
- 1.2.6 The RFL recognises that abuse and poor practice does take place in sport and that raising awareness and understanding of the main forms of abuse and poor practice and requiring reporting if abuse or poor practice is suspected, will further safeguard children participating in Rugby League.

### **1.3 KEY PRINCIPLES OF THE SAFEGUARDING POLICY**



**All those bound by this Policy should be conversant with the entirety of this Safeguarding Policy but for easy reference the key principles of the Policy are set out below. A breach of any of the following is a breach of the Safeguarding Policy and therefore Misconduct under Operational Rules Section D4.**

- 1.3.1 Every adult has a moral and statutory duty for the care, custody and safety of any child under the age of 18 under their supervision
- 1.3.2 The child's welfare is paramount and will be put before any other considerations such as winning matches or other competitive success.
- 1.3.3 All children, irrespective of age, disability, faith, gender, race or sexual orientation have the right to be protected from abuse (including but not limited to sexual abuse, grooming, breach of position of trust, physical abuse, neglect, bullying or undue pressure from any source) or poor practice.
- 1.3.4 Children must not be subjected to discrimination and/or abuse from any person, including spectators, based on their age, disability, faith, gender, race or sexual orientation and/or references to ability, height, weight or any other characteristics
- 1.3.5 All participants have a duty to report incidents, allegations or suspicions of poor practice or abuse or other breaches of the Safeguarding Policy and failure to do so is a breach of the Policy.
- 1.3.6 All participants have a duty to co-operate with and tell the truth to any RFL or Statutory Body's safeguarding investigation.
- 1.3.7 All incidents, allegations or suspicions of poor practice or abuse must be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately in confidence where possible
- 1.3.8 All children have a right to play or otherwise participate in the game of Rugby League in a safe and enjoyable environment.
- 1.3.9 All children must be allowed access to the game in a way that is appropriate for their age and ability and must be coached and trained by appropriately qualified coaches who abide by the Coaches' Code of Conduct and set a good example of behaviour, both on and off the pitch.
- 1.3.10 Children must not be required to play in too many games, or to attend training sessions, as to become a threat to their physical or emotional well-being and must not be allowed or encouraged to play when injured and/or concussed or potentially concussed.
- 1.3.11 Children must be allowed and encouraged to participate for fun and enjoyment rather than results on the pitch and must be given a fair share of playing time.
- 1.3.12 Children should be encouraged to achieve their potential and allowed to compete at the level at which they feel comfortable. This may not always be the highest level at which they could play.
- 1.3.13 Children will be provided with appropriate management, support, personal and social development with regard to their involvement in the game of Rugby League, whether they are playing, volunteering or officiating in the community or professional game.
- 1.3.14 All will comply with the Mandatory Safeguarding Requirements.
- 1.3.15 All those involved in Rugby League will ensure that they are adequately trained and understand the appropriate policies to ensure they are able to implement this policy.

Where specialist training sessions are planned then the coach taking the session and in overall responsibility of the session must be qualified in the type of activity being undertaken.

NB All children in the context of this Policy includes, but is not limited to, players, officials & volunteers, match officials, ball crews, cheerleaders and dancers, pre-match entertainment participants, spectators and/or visitors.

#### 1.4 SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE GROUPS RULES

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Rules have been adopted by the RFL, its Members and any other relevant body in England and participation, officiating, spectating or any other involvement in the game in England is dependent on acceptance of the Rules and this Policy. To ensure clarity and consistency in the matter of issues relating to Safeguarding, all Members of the RFL have delegated responsibility to the RFL.

#### 1.5 DEFINITIONS & ASSUMPTIONS

This Policy is based on the following principles:

- Child - This policy recognises and builds on the legal and statutory definitions of a child. The distinction between ages of consent, civil and criminal liability are recognised but in the pursuit of good practice in the delivery and management of Safeguarding in Rugby League, a child is recognised as being under the age of 18 years (Children's Act 2004 definition).
- Adult at Risk – “any person aged 18 years and over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental health issues, learning or physical disability, sensory impairment, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of him/herself or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or serious exploitation”. The RFL has an Adults at Risk Policy.
- Confidentiality should be upheld in line with the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Human Rights Act 2000 with the rider that the welfare of the child is paramount.
- The term “parents” used throughout this document is a generic term to represent parents, carers and guardians.
- The term “club” is used throughout this document as a generic term to represent any Rugby League agency in charge of players under the age of 18 years and includes, but is not limited to, Leagues, schools, festivals, tournaments, representative sides and Match Officials Societies.
- “Members” shall mean those organisations which are members of the RFL from time to time.
- The term ‘Club Welfare Officer’ is used throughout this document. A club welfare officer is the person within a sports club with primary responsibility for managing and reporting concerns about children and for putting into place procedures to safeguard children in the club. In the elite game they may also be referred to as Safeguarding Lead.

#### 1.6 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The RFL's approach to Safeguarding is based on the principles recognised within UK and international legislation and Government guidance. The following has been taken into consideration:

- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DOH) 2018
- The Children Act 1989

- The Children Act 2004
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Sexual Offences (Amendments) Act 2000
- The Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The Police Act 1997
- The Protection of Children Act 1999
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- The General Data Protection Regulations 2018
- The Equalities Act 2010
- Information Sharing Advice for Safeguarding Practitioners 2015
- Children and Social Work Act 2017

## **2 RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAFEGUARDING IN RUGBY LEAGUE**

### **2.1 WHO HAS RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAFEGUARDING IN RUGBY LEAGUE?**

The RFL and all individuals, clubs, leagues, societies, associations and other agencies involved in Rugby League will:

- Accept the moral and legal responsibility to implement safeguarding procedures and to provide a duty of care for children, safeguard their wellbeing and protect them from abuse and poor practice
- Listen to children and respect and promote their rights, wishes and feelings
- Recruit, train and supervise its employees and volunteers to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect children from abuse
- Require all staff and volunteers to adopt and abide by this Safeguarding Policy, the RESPECT Code of Conduct and the Rugby League Coaches' Code of Conduct
- Respond to any allegations appropriately
- Report all concerns, allegations or disclosures to the RFL (as set out below)
- Recognise that it is the responsibility of the RFL Safeguarding Case Management Group, experts and agencies to determine whether abuse has taken place but it is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns
- Recognise that working in partnership with children, their parents and other agencies is essential for the protection of children
- Co-operate fully and promptly with the statutory bodies and/or the RFL in any investigation
- Recognise the statutory responsibility of the Designated Officers (also known as Local Authority Designated Officer) to ensure the welfare of children and work with them to comply with procedures.

### **2.2 RFL SAFEGUARDING MANAGER**

Operational Rules 2022 – Safeguarding Policy

The role of the RFL Safeguarding Manager is to:

- Take the lead role in the development and establishment of the RFL's approach to safeguarding children, including reporting to the RFL Board and producing the RFL's Safeguarding Policy
- Manage cases of poor practice and/or abuse reported to the RFL and keep suitable records in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation
- Manage referrals to Designated Officers and/or Children's Social Care and/or Police and/or other agencies as appropriate
- Be a central point of contact for internal and external agencies
- Represent the RFL at external meetings related to Safeguarding
- Co-ordinate dissemination of policy, procedures and resources throughout the organisation
- Provide advice and support to the League and Club and Match Officials' Society Welfare Officers
- Advise on the RFL's Safeguarding training needs and develop a training strategy
- Maintain confidentiality in cases except where to do so would put a child at risk
- Maintain, roll out & review the RFL Safeguarding Plan
- Ensure adherence to CPSU standards
- Attend CPSU National Lead Officers' meetings and training.

### **2.3 LEAGUE WELFARE OFFICER**

Each League should appoint a League Welfare Officer who has been DBS checked at an enhanced level and attended training as required by the RFL from time to time. The League should notify the RFL Safeguarding Officer who is taking this role for their League. The role of the League Welfare Officers is to provide the following service within their League:

- Ensure that all Clubs have met the Mandatory Safeguarding Requirements as set out from time to time
- Encourage and promote best practice
- Promote the RFL's education opportunities
- Act as an initial point of contact should a member of a club have a concern or query
- Refer all concerns or queries to the RFL in line with the reporting procedures below
- Act as a link between the RFL and the League
- Receive confidential information from the RFL SCMG about cases on a need to know basis

### **2.4 CLUB WELFARE OFFICER**

All clubs must identify a designated person to take the role of Club Welfare Officer (CWO) who will lead on Safeguarding within the club. Before this person takes up their role they must be registered with the RFL, a process which includes undertaking an enhanced DBS check and attending such training as is required from time to time.

The CWO must have a formal role on the club's management committee and be supported by the management committee. The CWO will require support from the club, and designated training and support will be provided by the RFL. Clubs running a number of teams may need to appoint more than one CWO to ensure sufficient cover.

The role of the Club Welfare Officer is to:

- Ensure that the RFL Safeguarding Policy is adhered to within the Club
- Ensure all roles are assessed for eligibility for DBS checks and ensure checks are carried out
- Ensure safe recruitment procedures are followed
- Attend 'Safeguarding and Protecting Children' course and 'Time to Listen' course and keep the qualifications up to date
- Attend the RFL Safeguarding Conference at least every two years
- Ensure that Coaches have attended the 'Safeguarding and Protecting Children' course
- Act as first point of contact for coaches, parents or children who may have concerns (contact details must be included on the club website and noticeboard)
- Report any concerns to the RFL
- Ensure that information from the RFL is disseminated to relevant club personnel.

The CWO should also be:

- Appointed and supported by Committee
- Able to identify poor practice and abuse – behaviour that is harmful to children.
- Aware of the RFL's role and responsibilities to safeguard the welfare of children.
- Aware of the boundaries of the CWO role, e.g. it is not the CWO's role to investigate allegations; it is the duty of the CWO to report concerns in line with the RFL reporting procedures.
- Able to comply with confidentiality requirements
- Working within the RFL Safeguarding policy and procedures
- Aware of Equality and Diversity issues and additional Safeguarding vulnerability.

All the above can be obtained through attending Safeguarding & Protecting Children training, RFL 'Time to Listen' training and via the regular RFL updates and conference.

## **2.5 MATCH OFFICIALS SOCIETY WELFARE OFFICER**

All Match Officials Societies must identify at least one designated person to take the role of Match Officials Society Welfare Officer (MOSWO) to handle Safeguarding issues. Before this person takes up their role they must be registered with the RFL, a process which includes undertaking an enhanced level DBS check and attending such training as required from time to time..

The MOSWO must have a formal role on the Match Officials Society Committee and be supported by the Committee. The MOSWO will require support from all members of the Society, designated training and support will be provided by the RFL.

The MOSWO has the same role and requires the same knowledge as a CWO as set out above. Throughout this Policy where the term CWO is used the same applies to a MOSWO where applicable.

### **3 BEST SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE IN RUGBY LEAGUE**

#### **3.1 DUTY OF CARE**

Every person, club, league or other organisation in Rugby League has a legal duty of care to ensure the safety and welfare of any child involved in Rugby League or related activities, to safeguard them and protect them from foreseeable forms of harm.

Safeguarding involves all involved in Rugby League acknowledging that this duty of care exists and putting practical measures in place throughout the game to minimise the likelihood of foreseeable harm arising.

#### **3.2 MANDATORY SAFEGUARDING REQUIREMENTS**

It is essential that every club complies with the Mandatory Safeguarding Requirements set out below. Having these policies and procedures in place is essential. The following is a list of the fundamental duties of every Club to demonstrate this duty of care. Other organisations such as Leagues, schools, festivals, tournaments, representative teams and Match Officials Societies must take the appropriate and relevant steps for their circumstances – the RFL is available to offer advice as required.

**All clubs must:**

- Recruit, appoint, register and arrange for the training of a CWO who is the designated contact for Safeguarding issues
- Display their Club's own Safeguarding Policy Statement prominently at the club house where possible and in all cases on the website
- Ensure that all coaches and other volunteers who are engaged in Regulated Activity hold a current RFL DBS
- Follow the RFL reporting procedures by reporting all concerns, allegations and disclosures to the Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG)
- Comply with Do Not Deploy, Temporary or Permanent Suspension Orders and inform the SCMG if they believe a person is breaching such an Order
- Work within Safeguarding Principles including a commitment to RESPECT and Anti-Bullying
- Listen to children to ensure they feel empowered and ensure there is an open and listening environment
- Display CWO contact details around the club and on the website
- Have a Safeguarding policy which everybody at the club understands and puts into practice on a daily basis.
- Ensure that the following policies & procedures exist within the Club:

## **Policies**

- Safeguarding Policy
- Selection & Recruitment Policy
- Whistle Blowing Policy
- First Aid Standards
- Dressing Room Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Equality Policy
- RESPECT
- 100% ME Anti-Doping Policy
- Confidentiality and Data Protection
- Managing Challenging Behaviour & the Use of Force
- Photography Policy
- Travel Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Live Streaming Policy
- Escalation Policy

## **Procedures**

- Procedures for reporting concerns of abuse or poor practice
- Complaints & disciplinary procedures
- System for collecting player information and parental consent
- A Listening Club forum for children to express their views
- Information for parents and children
- Transport & away game/tour procedures
- Safer Recruitment and Selection procedures

These policies and procedures are available on request from the RFL either as completed documents or as templates for clubs to adapt to their own circumstances.

### **3.3 RECRUITMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND DEPLOYMENT OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

Anyone may have the potential to abuse children and some sex offenders use sport as a means to access and groom children in preparation for abuse, therefore all reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that people who are potential perpetrators of abuse or are otherwise unsuitable to work with children and young people due to their sexual or other behaviours are prevented from doing so.

It is also important to ensure that individuals who have a record of violence or an inability to control their temper or a record of domestic or animal abuse or abuse of drugs are appropriately risk assessed and where appropriate do not have access to children.

However, having a criminal record does not necessarily prohibit an individual from working with children. The RFL are obligated to conduct thorough risk assessments on any DBS disclosures that include relevant information. All staff involved in the risk assessment process are trained and carry out risk assessments in line with their training and the provisions of the RFL Policy on the Rehabilitation of Offenders. It is essential that the same procedures are used consistently for all posts whether staff or volunteers are full time or part-time.

Under this Policy all individuals working on behalf of, or otherwise representing, an organisation are treated as employees whether working in a paid or voluntary capacity.

All Clubs at all levels must use the recruitment procedures set out in detail on the RFL website and these must be followed for all relevant recruitment whether staff or volunteers. Clubs should remember that these procedures should be applied to people who are already involved in the club and subsequently take on a role which gives them greater access to children. Clubs should ensure that those staff and volunteers already involved in the game undergo the appropriate parts of the recruitment procedures in particular DBS checks, although these are only part of a safe and effective recruitment and selection procedure.

In particular, pre-appointment checks should be made including carrying out Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) checks through the RFL and taking up references. DBS checks must be completed every three years for existing staff or more frequently if instructed to do so by the SCMG. Coaching staff must have their qualifications checked and their coaching licence must be inspected and the number recorded. Coaches must also be reminded that they have agreed to abide by the Coaches' Code of Conduct and the RESPECT Code of Conduct. Coaches (and other volunteers where relevant) should be given copies of these documents

In addition, clubs should be clear about their club's aims and philosophy and whether a coach or volunteer is a good match for that club. Carrying out interviews, taking up references and criminal record checks are an important part of safe recruitment but also help to check that individuals meet the club ethos.

Once volunteers and staff are in place it is essential that they go through an induction process and that their behaviour and performance is monitored and feedback given. Club Management should be vigilant and look out for any concerns about poor practice or abuse and act on them at an early stage following the guidelines in this document. The Club management should also offer appropriate support, through liaison with the RFL Safeguarding Manager to those who report concerns/complaints and those accused.

### **3.4 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE**

The following is a non-exhaustive list of the general principles of good practice with children:

- Treating all children equally, and with respect and dignity
- Promoting a culture which ensures children are listened to and those views acted on (see RFL Listening Club Initiative)
- Respecting all children as individuals
- Always putting the welfare of each child first, before winning matches or achieving goals or supporting coaches;
- Making rugby league fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play
- Ensuring that all disciplinary sanctions are fair, proportionate to the issue and the child's age, and do not involve violent or physical punishment or humiliation
- Communicating with parents to promote positive outcomes for children



- Physical exertion, e.g. running around the pitch should not be used as a method of punishment
- Always working in an open environment (e.g. not having private or unobserved situations and encouraging an open environment (e.g. no secrets)
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance, both physical and emotional, with children
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process
- Not having sexual relationships with children at the club including 16 or 17 year olds - this includes all coaches and other staff or volunteers at a club
- Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children whilst undertaking any role within an RFL setting, promoting a healthy diet and condemning the use of illegal and performance enhancing substances

Policies covering best practice guidelines for working with children can be found on the RFL website [http://www.rugby-league.com/the\\_rfl/child\\_player\\_welfare](http://www.rugby-league.com/the_rfl/child_player_welfare)

### **3.5 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

Equality protects people from being discriminated against on the grounds of group membership i.e. gender, race, age, disability, religious beliefs, faith and sexual orientation. It is based on the legal obligation to comply with anti-discrimination legislation. For more information on relevant Equality legislation please contact the RFL.

Diversity is recognising, valuing and respecting the diversity of everyone. Diversity encompasses visible and non-visible differences which may include, but are not limited to, differences protected by the Equalities Act 2010.

All employees and volunteers should guard against making assumptions about an individual's identity based on stereotypes. As well as being inappropriate it can be very misleading making it less likely that a worker will be able to identify any problems or concerns or gain the trust and respect of the individuals that they are working with.

#### **Why is a commitment to Equality and Diversity essential?**

- 1 It is morally the right thing to do – both in terms of everyone's wellbeing and the wider reputation of the club as a safe and welcoming environment
- 2 It makes good business sense – if a club is seen to be inclusive, to challenge inequality and discrimination and to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants – there will be increased participation particularly among underrepresented groups and a greater likelihood that participants will stay involved
- 3 Legal responsibility – if a child experiences discrimination, victimisation or harassment based on their gender, race, disability, religious beliefs, faith, age or sexual orientation the club could face legal proceedings which are costly in terms of possible fines as well as a damaging loss of reputation
- 4 Certain groups can be more vulnerable to abuse.

### **3.6 EDUCATION**

It is essential that a sufficient number of individuals within the club have a basic level of Safeguarding training to ensure that this Policy is adhered to throughout the club. The current course which gives this knowledge is 'Safeguarding and Protecting Children' (SPC.) This course is a UK Coaching course which is required for the RFL L2 Coaching Licence and is strongly recommended for all those Operational Rules 2022 – Safeguarding Policy

working with children. For those who have previously attended this course a refresher is available online.

CWOs need more knowledge than other volunteers in order for them to be as effective as possible in fulfilling their role and responsibilities. This knowledge is imparted through the 'Time To Listen' (TTL) course. This course was designed by the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) and has been amended by the RFL (with CPSU approval) to reflect practices within the game. Although this course is primarily aimed at CWOs, other volunteers are more than welcome to attend in order to increase their knowledge.

### **3.7 LIVE STREAMING**

Clubs, Leagues and other organisations are regularly making use of live streaming to showcase their matches and events in Rugby League. It is important that those involved in youth and junior Rugby League are aware of the RFL's Live Streaming Policy which can be obtained by contacting the RFL.

This Policy sets out the mandatory requirements when providing a live stream in Rugby League and is intended to encourage good practice and ensure that streaming is done in a safe and appropriate manner.

Further guidance is available from the Safeguarding Manager at the RFL.

### **3.8 MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR**

Coaches & other volunteers may have to deal with challenging behaviour from the children or young people in their care. It is important that those involved in youth and junior Rugby League are aware of the RFL's Policy for Managing Challenging Behaviour which can be found on the RFL website

This Policy aims to encourage good practice, suggest some strategies and sanctions which can be used and identify unacceptable sanctions or interventions which must never be used.

The Policy is based on the following principles:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- All those involved in the sport including children, coaches & volunteers should have clear guidelines about the standard of behaviour which is expected and the processes for dealing with behaviour which is unacceptable
- Children must never be subject to any form of treatment that is harmful, abusive, humiliating or degrading
- Some children's behaviour may be caused by medical or psychological conditions. Coaches & volunteers may need additional help including discussing the child's needs with parents and/or carers and possibly from external agencies that already support that child
- Rugby League can be a beneficial experience for all children and children should only be excluded from the sport in exceptional cases.

## **4 ABUSE &/OR POOR PRACTICE**

### **4.1 RECOGNISING ABUSE &/OR POOR PRACTICE**

It is essential that all adults involved with children in Rugby League understand what constitutes abuse and/or poor practice, how to recognise it and how to respond to disclosures and allegations

(see Section 5). Abuse and poor practice can be very emotive and difficult subjects; however, it is important that they are discussed openly at clubs as this helps create an environment where people are more aware of the issues and sensitive to the needs of children. This open environment also gives people more confidence in recognising abuse and /or poor practice and reacting to it.

Abuse can and does occur outside the family setting. Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. The staff and volunteers in Rugby League, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, are not experts at such recognition. However, they do have a responsibility to act if they have any concerns about the behaviour of someone (an adult or another child) towards a child and to follow the procedures set out in Section 5 of this document.

## **4.2 DEFINING ABUSE**

Any person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or institutional or club environment by people known to them or more rarely by a stranger. Children can be abused by adults or by other children and some forms of abuse may be carried out through social media.

The effects of abuse can be extremely damaging and if allowed to continue or left unacknowledged may follow a person into adulthood. For instance, a person who has been abused as a child may find it difficult to maintain stable or trusting relationships, may suffer from low self-esteem or self-harm, may become involved in drugs or prostitution, may attempt suicide and may inflict the same behaviour on to other children in future.

### **4.2.1 Categories of Abuse**

#### **i) Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse occurs if people physically hit, burn, poison, shake or in some way hurt or injure children and young people, or fail to prevent these injuries from happening. In Rugby League, physical abuse could happen where training methods are inappropriate for the developmental age of the child or young person, where they are allowed to play with an injury or when concussed or potentially concussed or before the appropriate Graduated Return To Play has been completed or where inappropriate drugs or alcohol are offered or accepted. It would clearly happen if a child or young person is hit or physically restrained or manhandled by those supervising the game or training session.

#### **ii) Neglect**

Neglect takes place if adults fail to meet a child or young person's basic physical needs, e.g. for food, warmth and clothing, or emotional needs such as attention and affection. It occurs if children or young people are left alone or inadequately supervised or where they are exposed to danger, injury or extreme weather conditions. In Rugby League, neglect could occur if children or young people do not have proper supervision, clothing or are allowed or encouraged to play whilst injured or the concussion rules are not followed. It could occur if a child or young person's particular health needs are disregarded before, during, or after a game.

#### **iii) Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse occurs if children or young people are used to meet another person's sexual needs. This includes any form of sexual behaviour with a child or young person (by an adult or another child or young person), the use of sexually explicit language and jokes, inappropriate touching and exposure to pornographic material. It also includes 'sexting' an increasingly common activity among children and young people, where they share inappropriate or explicit images on-line or through mobile phones. 1 in 4 children have received unwanted images on the subject of sex according to the NSPCC 2014. Creating an indecent image of someone under 18 or sending such images is

against the law. Sexual abuse can occur in Rugby League. For example, where there is inappropriate touching, or where sexually-explicit jokes occur between adults and children or young people or if indecent images are taken or adapted and placed on pornography sites.

#### **iv) Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse includes frequent threatening, taunting or sarcastic behaviour, along with holding affection or being extremely overprotective. It includes racist or sexist behaviour and demeaning initiation ceremonies. It can be inflicted by other children and young people as well as by adults. Children and young people who are being abused or bullied in any way will also experience emotional abuse. In Rugby League, coaches or parents emotionally abuse children and young people if they constantly criticise, abuse their power, or impose unrealistic pressure to perform to a high standard. It may also occur if a club allows members to deride people with disabilities or from minority cultures and use derogatory language about them.

#### **v) Bullying**

Although anyone can be the target of bullying, children and young people who are perceived as "different" from the majority may be at greater risk of bullying. This includes children and young people from minority cultures or children and young people with disabilities. Bullying can be defined as:

- Physical: hitting, kicking and theft
- Verbal: name calling, constant teasing, sarcasm, racist or homophobic taunts, threats and gestures
- Emotional: tormenting, mobile text messaging, ridiculing, humiliating and ignoring
- Sexual: unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments.

Bullying can take place anywhere, but is more likely to take place where there is inadequate supervision. In Rugby League it is more likely to take place in the changing rooms or on the way to and from the Rugby League pitch - but can also take place at a training session or in a competition. Rugby League's competitive nature can create and even support an environment for the bully if individuals and clubs are unaware.

In an NSPCC survey of young people (2000), bullying was reported to be the most common source of distress and anxiety.

The bully in Rugby League can be:

- A parent who pushes too hard
- A coach or manager who has a win-at-all-costs philosophy
- A coach who excludes a player or does not give them game time
- Allowing other children or parents to make decisions on excluding a child
- A child or young person intimidating another
- An official who places unfair pressure on a child or young person.

Bullying includes Cyber-Bullying which is using on-line spaces to spread rumours about someone or exclude them. It can also include text messaging, including video and picture messaging.

#### **vi) Child Trafficking &/or Modern Day Slavery**

Child Trafficking and/or Modern Day Slavery involve the taking of children out of their protective environment and preying on their vulnerability for the purpose of exploitation. Any concerns about the possibility of a child or young person being trafficked or enslaved should be reported via the statutory agencies.

Although no precise figures exist, the International Labour Organization (in 2005) estimated that between 980,000 to 1,225,000 children - both boys and girls - are in a forced labour situation as a result of trafficking internationally.

**vii) Female Genital Mutilation**

Female genital mutilation is a form of child abuse common to some African, Asian and Middle Eastern communities in the UK. This illegal and life-threatening initiation ritual can leave young victims in agony and with physical and psychological problems that can continue into adulthood. Carried out in secret and often without anaesthetic it involves the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs. The NSPCC Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) helpline offers specialist advice, information and support to anyone concerned that a child's welfare is at risk because of female genital mutilation. Though callers' details can remain anonymous, any information that could protect a child from abuse will be passed to the Police or Social Care services. Clubs should be mindful if a regular attendee goes missing from a club or if a child, their peer or relative starts expressing worries about a trip abroad. If you are worried that a child may be at risk of FGM, you can contact the 24 hour helpline anonymously on 0800 028 3550 or email [fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk). If you wish to find out more about FGM then you can access the NSPCC's fact sheet: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/fgm>

**viii) Forced Marriage**

A forced marriage is where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities, cannot) consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used. It is recognised in the UK as a form of violence against women and men, domestic/child abuse and a serious abuse of human rights. The pressure put on people to marry against their will can be physical (including threats, actual physical violence and sexual violence) or emotional and psychological (for example, when someone is made to feel like they're bringing shame on their family).

The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) operates a public helpline to provide advice and support to victims and those being pressurised into forced marriages. Of the 1,300 plus cases dealt with in 2012 40% of victims were under 18. If you are worried that a child may be at risk of forced marriage, you can contact FMU via the helpline on 020 7008 0151 or email [fm@fco.gov.uk](mailto:fm@fco.gov.uk). For more information on forced marriages go to [www.gov.uk/forced-marriage](http://www.gov.uk/forced-marriage)

**ix) Honour Based Violence**

The term 'Honour Based Violence' (HBV) is the internationally recognised term describing cultural justifications for violence and abuse. It justifies the use of certain types of violence and abuse against women, men and children. The Association of Chief Police Officers defines HBV as: 'A crime or incident, which has or may have been committed, to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community'. HBV cuts across all cultures, nationalities, faith groups and communities and transcends national and international boundaries. HBV is also a Domestic Abuse issue, a Child Abuse concern and a crime. If you are worried that a child may be at risk of HBV contact Children's Social Care for further advice and guidance or speak to the RFL Safeguarding Manager.

**x) Radicalisation**

Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation should be seen as part of an organisation's wider safeguarding duties and is similar in nature to protecting children from other forms of harm and abuse. During the process of radicalisation, it is possible to intervene to prevent vulnerable people being radicalised.

Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and/or forms of extremism. There is no single way of identifying an individual who is likely to be susceptible to an extremist ideology. It can happen in many different ways and settings. Specific background factors may contribute to vulnerability which are often combined with specific influences such as family, friends or online, and with specific needs for which an extremist or terrorist or racist or supremacist group may appear to provide an answer. The internet and the use of social media in particular has become a major factor in the radicalisation of young people. As with managing other safeguarding risks, staff/volunteers should be alert to changes in children's behaviour which could indicate that they may be in need of help or protection.

**xi) Child criminal (CCE) and sexual exploitation (CSE)**

Child Criminal and Child Sexual Exploitation are complex issues that everyone who works with children, young people and/ or their families should have a good understanding of. They both involve hidden crimes and young people often know their abuser.

When a child is being exploited in either of these ways, they may be given things such as gifts, drugs, money, status and affection, in exchange for performing sexual activities or taking part in criminal activities.

If a child reports either of these forms of abuse to you or you suspect a child is involved in criminal or sexual exploitation you should report this to the RFL Safeguarding manager as soon as possible

**4.2.2 Poor Practice**

Poor practice is the term used to describe practice which falls below the standards expected to such an extent that a child's welfare is compromised and is where an adult's or another child's behaviour is inappropriate and may be causing concern to a child. In application of this Policy, poor practice includes any behaviour of a Safeguarding nature which contravenes the RESPECT Code of Conduct or Coaches' Code of Conduct, infringes an individual's rights and/ or is a failure to fulfil the highest standards of care. Poor practice is unacceptable in Rugby League, should never be sanctioned and will be treated seriously with appropriate actions taken.

Some examples of Poor Practice are:

- Insufficient care is taken to avoid injuries e.g. by excessive training or inappropriate training for the age or maturity, experience and ability of players;
- Giving continued and unnecessary preferential treatment to individuals and regularly or unfairly rejecting others e.g. singling out and focusing on the talented players or the coach's own children or not having a fair team selection policy;
- Having a win at all costs mentality
- A club supporting a coach so that it appears that this overrides the principle that the welfare of the child is paramount
- Placing children in potentially compromising and uncomfortable situations with adults
- Allowing abusive or concerning practices to go unchallenged and unreported e.g. failing to deal with or report a coach who ridicules or swears at players who make a mistake during a match
- Failing to adhere to the game's RESPECT or other codes of conduct including the use of foul and abusive language
- Issuing disciplinary sanctions which are not proportionate to age and/or involve violent or physical punishment or humiliation
- Excluding a child from a club without working with the child and parents to improve behaviour
- Adults participating in training sessions or drills including other variants of the sport. E.g., touch and pass with children under the age of 14.

**4.2.3 Practice Never to be Sanctioned**

No one involved in the game should ever:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay

- Share a room with a child

- Shower with a child
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- Using or allowing children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- Allow allegations made by a child go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon;
- Do things of a personal nature for children, young people or disabled adults, that they can do for themselves
- Take a child or children to their home where they will be alone with them
- Invite or allow a child or children to stay with them at their home unsupervised
- Contact a child directly by telephone or social media
- Allow or encourage children to drink alcohol, take drugs or smoke
- Ignoring Health & Safety Rules

#### **N.B Personal Care**

It should be clear to everyone at the club (including young people and their parents/carers) that sports coaches and other volunteers should not be involved in providing intimate personal care for young or disabled participants. This should always be the responsibility of the parents, carers or other identified chaperones, care staff or volunteers. The reasons for this include:

- It puts the child in a potentially vulnerable position
- The potential negative impact on the young person's privacy and dignity
- Sports staff are unlikely to be trained to carry out this role and it isn't their role – they are there to facilitate and supervise sports activities • It can impact on the level of adult supervision for the remainder of the group
- There may be health and safety considerations around manual handling procedures
- The adult may be vulnerable to others misinterpreting their behaviour or motivation, and may result in concerns or allegations arising
- It can reinforce the child's vulnerability and lack of autonomy
- It models and may help to perpetuate poor practice

If any of the following incidents should occur to staff or volunteers they should be reported immediately to another colleague/CWO and make a written note of the event. This action should be taken as soon as possible for the protection of all individuals concerned. Parents should also be informed of the incident:

- If you accidentally hurt a player
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner
- If a player appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- If a player misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

#### **4.3 INDICATORS OF ABUSE**

Children and young people may be reluctant to tell someone when they are being abused or may be bullied out of disclosing or be forced to retract their concerns, so it is essential that every adult is aware of the possible signals that a child and young person's welfare or safety is being threatened.

However, there is rarely a clear sign and you may often have to piece together various snippets of information and rely on your instinct that something does not seem quite right. You may have one piece of information that, when added to that of others, forms a clear picture of abuse. This is often compared to fitting pieces of a jigsaw together. Only when you have a few pieces can you start to see the true picture.

It is not the responsibility of those working in Rugby League to decide that child abuse is occurring, but it is their responsibility to act and pass on suspicions and/or information to the RFL SCMG and/or appropriate statutory agencies.

The list below gives some possible physical and behavioural signs of abuse. Some are very explicit and specific, others are much more general. You need to be careful as any one of these signs might have another very plausible explanation, such as a death in the family, loss of a pet, an absent family member or problems at school. However, you should remember to raise your concerns if there is a combination of unexplained changes over a period of time. Never allow a child or young person's disability or cultural difference to explain away concerns. This is not a judgement for you to make.

Indications that a child may be being abused include the following:

Physical Abuse	Fear of contact, aggression, temper, running away, fear of going home, reluctance to change or uncover body, depression, withdrawal, bullying or abuse of others. Unexplained and unusual bruising, finger and strap marks, cigarette burns, bite marks, fractures, scalds, missing teeth.
Neglect	Always being tired, early or late, absent, few friends, regularly left alone, stealing, no money, parents or carers not attending or supportive. Constant hunger, dirty, ill-fitting clothes, inappropriate clothing, weight change, untreated conditions and continual minor infections.
Sexual Abuse/Female Genital Mutilation	Apparent fear of someone, nightmares, running away, sexually explicit knowledge or behaviour, masturbation, bedwetting, eating problems, substance abuse, unexplained money or gifts, acting out with toys, self-harm. Distress or anxiety on reading texts, being withdrawn, anger, moodiness, reduced performance. Genital pain, itching, bleeding, bruising, discharge, stomach pains, discomfort, pregnancy, incontinence, urinary infections, STDs, thrush, pain on passing motions.
Emotional Abuse	Unable to play, fear of mistakes, low self-esteem, fear of telling parents, withdrawn, unexplained speech & language difficulties, few friends. Weight change, lack of growth or development, unexplained speech disorders, self-harm.
Bullying	Difficulty making friends, anxiety over school, truancy, withdrawn, anger, moodiness, suicide attempts, reduced performance, money and possessions lost, stealing, distress and anxiety on reading texts Weight change, unexplained injuries and bruising, stomach and headaches, bedwetting, hair pulled out.
Forced Marriage/Female Genital Mutilation	A regular attender goes missing from the club or a child, their peer or relative starts expressing worries about a trip abroad.
Radicalisation	Showing sympathy for extremist causes, glorifying violence, especially to other faiths or cultures, making remarks or comments about being at extremist events or rallies outside school, intolerance of difference, including faith, culture, gender, race or sexuality or attempts to impose extremist views or practices on others.



Child Exploitation	Criminal	Children who are being criminally exploited may be recruited to gangs to commit crimes. There are many signs to look out for which may indicate a child is being criminally exploited which include but not limited to them going missing, hanging out with older peers, being angry, violent or aggressive. Having unexplained items and buying new things and self-harming or feeling emotionally unwell.
Child Exploitation	Sexual	Sexual exploitation can be difficult to spot and sometimes mistaken for 'normal' teenage behaviour. However, you may notice sharp changes in mood or character, the child may have money or other things they can't or won't explain.

The RFL website <https://www.rugby-league.com/governance/safeguarding/reporting-a-concern> contains detailed information about how to report any concerns.

#### 4.4 AWARENESS OF INCREASED VULNERABILITY TO ABUSE

All those involved in rugby league need to be aware that some children can be more vulnerable to abuse because of their needs and background.

##### 4.4.1 Disability

Disabled Children may be more vulnerable to abuse because they may:

- Require intimate personal care
- Experience negative attitudes and abuse due to their disability
- May be ignored and excluded from activities if people fail to recognise that it is the barriers that society puts up which prevent their involvement not their disability *per se*
- May be dependent on their abuser for care
- Be less able to resist either verbally or physically
- Have a smaller network of friends to support and protect them
- Lack access to peer groups to discover what is acceptable behaviour
- Have significant communication difficulties including the use of sign language
- Be more likely to have their verbal or non-verbal communication misinterpreted as relating to their disability rather than abusive experiences
- Have medical needs which may be used to explain abuse.

##### 4.4.2 Black, Asian & other Minority Ethnic groups

Children from Black, Asian & other Minority Ethnic groups may be more vulnerable to abuse because they may:

- Experience racism and racist attitudes
- Expect to be ignored by people in authority due to experience of institutionalised racism
- Be afraid of further abuse or racist abuse if they challenge others
- Be subjected to myths based on racial stereotyping

- Want to fit in and not want to make a fuss
- Be using or learning English as a second language and therefore find it more difficult to communicate.

#### **4.4.3 Religion and faith**

Children from various religions and faiths may be more vulnerable to abuse because they may:

- Experience religious intolerance, fear or hatred based on their religious beliefs
- Be subjected to myths based on stereotypes
- Suffer bullying or assumptions about their commitment to the game due to their religious beliefs and practices
- Be discriminated against, harassed or bullied based on their actual or perceived religious beliefs due to fear of religious extremism.

#### **4.4.4 Sexual orientation**

Children are often aware of their sexuality from an early age and many children may already identify as being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBTQ+). LGBTQ+ Children may be more vulnerable to abuse because they may:

- Be subjected to homophobia – which includes bullying abuse or physical attacks
- Have their experiences as LGBTQ+ children rendered invisible by heterosexist attitudes and assumptions which assumes that everyone is heterosexual and that this is preferable to being gay.

#### **4.4.5 Match Officials**

A considerable proportion of the match officials at youth and junior games are children and their role makes them particularly vulnerable to abuse in all its forms. Many young officials face verbal, emotional and even physical abuse whilst carrying out the role and many become disillusioned at best or suffer a significant and lasting loss of confidence when faced with abuse of this nature.

In addition to abuse from coaches and spectators match officials are vulnerable to abuse from other match officials. It is important that Leagues and Match Officials Societies implement all the safeguarding principles to protect young match officials.

#### **4.4.6 Players on an Elite Pathway**

Research shows that players who are on an elite performance pathway may be subject to burn out, increased focus on win at all costs, excessive training regimes. Due to the culture of sport, an authority system may be created which facilitates power, obedience and potentially the rationalisation of abuse which can be more prevalent at the elite level. This abuse can take any form including physical, sexual and bullying. The elite environment can also be used to suggest that suffering, poor practice or abuse is part of the requirements to succeed in that environment.

For many young people, reaching a scholarship or academy or representative level has been their focus for a number of years, and they will have trained hard to achieve this. Some parents will also have made a significant contribution and often considerable sacrifices to support their child's progress and success. In these circumstances it can be difficult for children, young people and parents to report abuse.

#### 4.4.7 Children who take on Leadership Roles

More and more children are taking on leadership and volunteering roles within Rugby League. This should be an enjoyable and positive experience. Unfortunately, some adults (coaches, parents, volunteers and spectators) lose sight of the fact that an individual in a leadership role who is under 18 is still legally a child.

Many children suffer verbal, physical and emotional abuse in leadership roles. This is unacceptable in Rugby League and the harm that is caused to these children needs to be recognised by adults within the game.

#### 4.4.8 Economic Deprivation

Children who come from families suffering short or long term economic deprivation may be more susceptible to abuse through neglect (which may be unintentional), lack of purchase power making them an easier target to a groomer using gifts and bullying by peers.

### 4.5 REDUCING THE POTENTIAL FOR VULNERABILITY

Children in Rugby League may be subjected to bullying by children of the same or opposite sex and may have assumptions made relating to their sexuality or sexual orientation because of their involvement in playing a competitive contact sport such as Rugby League. Such assumptions or stereotypes are wholly inappropriate and should not be condoned as they may increase the vulnerability of some children to abuse.

It is important that both girls and boys are accorded the same levels of respect by all those working with them and should not be treated unequally because of their gender.

Given the increased vulnerability of some groups of children it is important that clubs (match officials societies) create a safe culture including:

- Finding ways of understanding and communicating with all children
- Maintaining best practice at all times in physical and health care
- Considering and responding to the diverse cultures within which a club is based
- Respecting and valuing diversity
- Building positive relationships with parents and carers and include them in club activities
- Observing changes in mood, appearance and behaviour and discuss those concerns with families, carers, the CWO, or RFL Safeguarding Manager if suspicions or concerns are significantly raised about the care or welfare of the child
- Acknowledging that disabled children are additionally vulnerable and that vigilance is essential
- Having systems in place that ensure there is no abuse of match officials from anyone connected with the club
- Taking a zero-tolerance approach to abusive behaviour directed towards a child who is carrying out a leadership role is not acceptable
- Reporting inappropriate behaviour to the RFL Safeguarding Manager as abuse or poor practice
- Ensuring that the RESPECT code of conduct is enforced and actively promoted at the club
- Making sure that all club officials set good examples of behaviour at all times

- Ensuring that CWO and others are aware of the dangers of radicalisation
- Seek advice from RFL Safeguarding Manager

#### **4.6 POSITIONS OF TRUST**

The power and influence that a coach (or other member of staff/volunteer) has over a child involved in sport cannot be under-estimated. If there is an additional competitive aspect to the activity and the coach/staff member/volunteer has some responsibility for the child's success or failure, then the power and influence of that person is increased. It is therefore vital for coaches/staff/volunteers to recognise these issues and to ensure that they do not abuse their positions of trust.

Whilst young people aged 16 or 17 can legally consent to some types of sexual activity, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 states that "It is an offence for a person aged 18 or over to involve a child under that age in sexual activity where he or she is in a specified position of trust in relation to that child. This includes those who care for, advise, supervise or train children and young people". The RFL's policy is based on the principles within that Act.

Any person who has any direct and/or indirect power or influence over a Child within the Game (including, but not limited to coaches, team managers, match officials, CWOs, club officials, professional and semi-professional Players) are in a position of trust with that Child. Each such person shall:

- act within appropriate boundaries in relation to all forms of communication with any such Child;
- not have intimate, sexual or inappropriate relationship with any such Child

Any breach of the above is serious Misconduct.

For the avoidance of doubt a Child may be in a position of trust with another Child where they have taken on a leadership role.

#### **4.7 GROOMING**

The majority of adults working with children in Rugby League are committed to providing an enjoyable and safe environment in which to participate. However, a small proportion of adults actively seek opportunities to abuse children for their own sexual needs. When thinking about danger signs of grooming it is important to recognise that both boys and girls are groomed and/or sexually abused.

Sexual abuse of children is often the result of pre-meditated actions that are carefully planned. Preparing a child or organisation (i.e. a Club) is described as 'grooming' and is illegal under the provisions of The Sexual Offences Act 2003 and Misconduct under this Policy. It is important to understand how an abuser can 'groom' a club or parents or a child by appearing trustworthy and helpful, therefore giving the impression that they can take responsibility for a young person/some young people.

Abusers come from all sections of society, within and outside of the family and within and outside Rugby League. They may be perceived as 'respectable' people – the very last person anyone could suspect of abusing a child; this is usually the image they work hard to portray. Research into abuse demonstrates clearly that children are most likely to be abused by someone they know and who is likely to be in a position of trust with the child. Whilst the vast majority of sexual abusers are male, it is important not to overlook the fact that female sexual abusers do exist.

Sexual abusers use various techniques to 'groom' children, organisations and parents. These include:

- Seeking opportunities to be in contact with children, e.g. volunteering.

- Making friends with children, coaches, volunteers or parents
- Appearing trustworthy and helpful
- Giving presents to children or offering additional individual support/coaching
- Complementing the child to make them feel comfortable and confident.
- Threatening (you won't get picked for the team) or bribing (you will get picked for the team) the child

Abusers target children who they see as particularly vulnerable, this may be due to the child having low self-esteem or it appearing that they have little parental support. Therefore, children's parents should always be encouraged to be part of the club as this can act as an extra safeguard.

There are particular risks for talented children and these children are more at risk of abuse on 'away trips'. These risks are particularly acute at the point at which a player is at 'pre-peak' performance. These risks relate to:

- Separation from close family and friends– due to amount of 'away' travel and possibly living away from home
- Dependence on the coach for team selection, advice, emotional support, money
- Lack of safeguards away from home such as lack of checks on accommodation practices
- Too much emphasis on winning and high performance and not enough on personal development and enjoyment. This environment can sometimes be condoned by parents.

Any concerns relating to an adult's behaviour or intentions towards children should be reported appropriately, see Section 5.

#### **4.8 Contextual Safeguarding**

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, children's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships children form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. It requires all who work with children to have a consideration for their needs in the wider non-family context and an understanding that environmental factors around children and their activities including sporting and communication are highly relevant to ensuring children are kept safe.

Children may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation from within their peer groups, those in a position of trust, or from within the wider community and/ or online. These threats can take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple threats including direct or online abuse and sexual exploitation.

Within our sport we recognise there are certain environments or contexts where children may be vulnerable, and we need to ensure all members take action to prevent risk. An example of a specific risk may include in the changing rooms, where the use of cameras and other devices capable of taking/ recording images may be possible due to unmonitored direct communication with children which may be peers or those in a position of trust.

On that basis, all clubs must ensure they adopt the RFL policies set out in section 3.2 of this policy.

## **5 RESPONDING TO, RECORDING & REPORTING POOR PRACTICE, ABUSE AND BULLYING OR OTHER CONCERNS WITHIN OR OUTSIDE RUGBY LEAGUE**

### **5.1 BACKGROUND**

There is a legal and moral responsibility to report any concerns about a child within Rugby League and any concerns which may be raised about a child outside the sport. Child abuse of all types, particularly sexual abuse, can generate strong and confusing emotions in those facing such a situation for instance disbelief, disgust, anger etc. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take. Abuse and poor practice can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment.

It is understood that people may often have concerns about reporting the behaviour of adults who are aggressive and potentially violent. Where possible the RFL will protect the identity of the person who has reported an incident when they feel threatened by the individual concerned. It should be remembered that if these individuals are intimidating to other adults they are likely to be even more intimidating to any children within their care and that there is a duty of care and an obligation under this Policy to report such behaviour.

Rugby League clubs are often close communities which generate strong loyalties between the volunteers working together. The RFL appreciates that it can be difficult to report close colleagues but would remind all those involved in the game of their over-riding moral duty to ensure the welfare of the children at the club above any sense of loyalty to colleagues or the club. All suspicions of abuse or cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

A coach, official or volunteer may have regular contact with children and be an important link in the identifying cases where a child needs protection. In addition coaches can often become the only adult that a child feels they can trust. This can often lead to a coach receiving a disclosure about abuse outside the club environment. In these circumstances there is a duty to pass on the information and coaches and other volunteers need to be aware of the action to take in these circumstances.

### **5.2 WHISTLE BLOWING**

The RFL is determined to ensure that the culture of the sport is one in which it is safe, acceptable and gives confidence to those involved in rugby league to raise concerns about unacceptable practice and misconduct. In order to achieve this, the RFL has a Whistle Blowing Policy which can be found at <https://www.rugby-league.com/governance/safeguarding> The RFL rules make it an offence to harass or victimise a whistle blower.

### **5.3 WHAT TO REPORT**

In order for the Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG) to carry out its responsibilities under the Safeguarding Policy the Group needs to be informed of the following issues or related allegations. In appropriate instances the Group will log the issue/allegation and refer it to the relevant League or Club to deal with and report back to the SCMG, alternatively the SCMG will deal with the issue/allegation itself or refer it to the appropriate statutory agencies.

When reporting an allegation/incident LWO's and CWO's should complete a cause for concern/safeguarding intervention form <https://www.rugby-league.com/governance/safeguarding/reporting-a-concern> and submit it to the RFL Safeguarding Manager who will deal with the allegation or incident.

The following is a list of issues and/or allegations which should be referred to the SCMG, please note this is not exhaustive and if anyone in the game believes a Child is at risk of harm this should be reported.

**5.3.1 Physical abuse**

- Assault or inappropriate contact on a Child by an adult
- Allegations or suspicions that a Child is being physically abused in or outside Rugby League

**5.3.2 Verbal Abuse**

- Threatening and/or abusive language that causes (or that a reasonable adult would expect to cause) emotional distress to a Child

NB just because a Child does not appear to be emotionally distressed does not mean that they are not, when verbal abuse is regular Children learn to hide their feelings.

**5.3.3 Racist, homophobic or other discriminatory abuse**

- Racist, homophobic or other discriminatory abuse or allegations of abuse which have not resulted in a dismissal.

NB if the Match Official has heard the abuse and dismissed the player then the report should be dealt with in the same manner as any other dismissal

**5.3.4 Neglect**

- Allegations or suspicions that a Child is being neglected

**5.3.5 Sexual abuse/breach of Relationships of Trust**

- Allegations or suspicions that a Child is being sexually abused either in the game or in any other place e.g. school, home, church, by other Children
- Allegations of an adult sharing a room with a Child, showering with Children, making sexually suggestive comments to a Child, inappropriate touching, taking or inviting a Child to their home on their own
- Allegations or suspicions that a volunteer or employee is entering into a sexual relationship with a Child under 18 involved in the game.

**5.3.6 Information about Participants**

- Information and/or rumours about participants in the game which if true would lead a reasonable person to believe that the participant (regardless of age) may be a threat to the safety of Children.

**5.3.7 Bullying**

- Bullying of Children by adults
- Child on Child bullying should usually be dealt with by the CWO at the club who may contact the Safeguarding Manager for advice.

**5.3.8 Female Genital Mutilation, Honour Based Violence, Radicalisation**

Allegations or suspicions of any of the above should usually be reported to the police, however CWOs may contact the Safeguarding Manager for advice.

**5.3.9 Poor Practice**

Poor practice should initially be reported to the Safeguarding team who may decide to deal with it (particularly if either the adult concerned is already known to the Safeguarding team or if there have

been a number of incidents of poor practice raised at a particular club which the club does not appear to be capable of dealing with) or may refer the issue back to the club/league to deal with internally. In these situations the club/league must report back on their findings.

#### **5.4 WHAT ACTION TO TAKE TO REPORT CONCERNS, REPORT A DISCLOSURE OR AN ALLEGATION**

On becoming aware of or witnessing a concern, receiving a disclosure or an allegation or a breach of this Policy you should:

##### **In the case of Abuse:**

- Contact the CWO who will report to the RFL Safeguarding Manager
- If the CWO is not available report your concerns direct to the RFL Safeguarding Manager
- The RFL Safeguarding Manager will report to the RFL Safeguarding Case Management Group or the statutory agencies as appropriate
- If neither the CWO or the Safeguarding Manager is available and/or immediate action is required to protect the child contact Children's Social Care or the police as appropriate

##### **In the case of Poor Practice:**

- Contact the CWO who will report to the RFL Safeguarding Manager
- If the CWO is not available report your concerns direct to the RFL Safeguarding Manager

#### **5.5 ADVICE ON ACTION TO BE TAKEN IF A CHILD DISCLOSES TO YOU**

The points below set out general principles to be followed with all concerns, allegations and disclosures.

If a child informs you directly that he/she, or another child, is concerned about someone's behaviour towards them (this is termed a 'disclosure') then:

##### **The person receiving the information should:**

- React calmly so as not to frighten or deter the child
- Believe what the child is telling you
- Tell the child he/she is not to blame and that he/she was right to tell
- Ensure the immediate safety of the child
- If the child needs immediate medical treatment, take them to hospital or telephone for an ambulance, inform doctors of the concerns and make sure that they know that this is a Safeguarding issue
- Take what the child says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is said by a child who has speech disability and/or differences in language
- Keep any questions to the minimum required to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said
- Do not ask leading questions or make suggestions about what may have happened
- Reassure the child but do not make promises of confidentiality which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments
- In the event of suspicion of sexual abuse do not let the child shower or wash until given permission to do so by the police as washing can destroy valuable evidence
- Before contacting parents ensure that they are not the perpetrators



- Where appropriate seek advice immediately from Children's Social Care or Police who will advise on the action to be taken, including advice on contacting parents, Expert advice can also be provided by the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000 or ChildLine on 0800 1111 (both 24 hours).
- Alternatively contact the RFL Safeguarding Team who can make referrals on your behalf
- Involve somebody else – if not Children's Social Care or Police then the CWO, or the RFL Safeguarding Manager so that you can begin to protect the child and gain support for yourself.
- Write down the details of the concern, incident and/or what the child has disclosed as soon as possible, including details of who this information has been shared with and when.

**The person receiving the information should NOT:**

- Panic
- Allow their shock or distaste to show
- Show any disbelief or fail to take the allegations seriously
- Ask questions other than to clarify that they have enough information to act
- Speculate or make assumptions
- Make negative comments about alleged abuser
- Approach the alleged abuser
- Make promises or agree to keep secrets
- Take sole responsibility
- Shirk the responsibility to report the concern.

**5.6 CONFIDENTIALITY**

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. The legal principle that the "welfare of the child is paramount" means that considerations of confidentiality which might apply to other situations within the organisation should not be allowed to override the right of children to be protected from harm.

However every effort must be made to ensure that appropriate confidentiality is maintained when an allegation has been made and is being investigated.

Information should be handled and disseminated on a 'need to know' basis only. This may include the following people:

- The CWO;
- The League Welfare Officer;
- The RFL Safeguarding Manager and Safeguarding Case Management Group;
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused (only following advice from the Children's Social Care/Police or where the abuse does not involve the family);
- The person making the allegation;
- Children's Social Care/the Designated Officer/Police;

- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a young person) only following advice from the Children's Social Care/Police.

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with the data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

## 5.7 RECORDING THE INCIDENT OR ALLEGATION

Information passed to Children's Social Care or the Police must provide as much detail as is available and relevant in order to be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed record at the time of the disclosure/concern. The initial report should be made to the RFL Safeguarding Manager using a cause for concern/ safeguarding intervention form. <https://www.rugby-league.com/governance/safeguarding/reporting-a-concern> The RFL Safeguarding Manager will act as the single point of contact with all statutory agencies.

Information required at the referral stage:

**Child** - Age/ gender / name / disabilities / address /date of birth/ contact details/ parental responsibility / agencies already working with the family / relationship between child and accused.

**Accused** - Name / address / contact details/ position – employee / volunteer / paid / level of coach; Any other allegations; Marital status; Age; Previous incidents.

### Primary evidence

Core information about the alleged incident.

- a) Facts from the person making the allegation including dates/times/venue/witness details;
- b) Records with dates;
- c) Has anyone else been informed or is anyone else already involved in the investigation.

Other than in the case of an emergency situation the initial report should be made to the RFL Safeguarding Manager who will act as the point of contact with the statutory authorities.

In an emergency reporting the matter to the Police or Children's Social Care should not be delayed by attempts to obtain more information. A record should also be made of the name and job title of the Children's Social Care or Police Officer whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call. Any information forwarded to the Children's Social Care or Police must also be provided to the RFL Safeguarding Manager and/or the RFL Safeguarding Case Management Group (as soon as reasonably possible) who will take over management of the case and consider any wider issues within the game and put in place relevant protections.

Where reports are made to the RFL, the Safeguarding Manager will inform the Designated Officer where relevant as soon as possible.

In cases which are not an emergency but where there are concerns about a child's welfare the RFL Safeguarding Manager can make a referral to Children's Social Care on behalf of a club.

## 5.8 THE ROLE OF THE STATUTORY AGENCIES

Where clubs are made aware by any of the statutory agencies including but not limited to the Designated Officer, Children's Social Care and the Police, that their club or a volunteer or child at their club is subject to an investigation relevant to any issue related to the Safeguarding Policy the **club must always inform the RFL Safeguarding Manager immediately**. The RFL may have to take immediate action to protect the welfare of children but will always work in tandem with the statutory agencies.

**5.9 THE RFL CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (Please refer to RFL Operational Rules D1 and D4 for full details) <https://www.rugby-league.com/governance/rules-and-regulations/operational-rules>**

All reports of alleged abuse or poor practice made to the RFL Safeguarding Manager are referred to the RFL Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG) who meet regularly throughout the year to consider those cases. The powers of the SCMG are set out in RFL Operational Rules Tiers 1-3 and Tiers 4-6.

- The SCMG may refer allegations to the RFL's team of Independent Compliance Investigators, some of whom have specific Safeguarding experience. The Investigators will carry out an investigation and provide a report to the SCMG. Following the investigation the SCMG will consider the Compliance Investigator's report and decide on the course of action to take under the Operational Rules.

Where the Police and/or Children's Social Care and/or a Designated Officer is involved in a case the RFL SCMG will liaise with the statutory bodies and may defer any action until the statutory bodies have completed their work. Irrespective of the findings of statutory bodies enquiries, the RFL Safeguarding Case Management Group will assess all individual cases to decide whether action should be taken by the RFL in line with the Operational Rules.

The welfare of the child will always remain paramount.

**5.10 SUPPORT TO DEAL WITH THE AFTERMATH**

Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to children, parents and members of staff and volunteers. Use of Help Lines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The British Association of Counselling Directory may be a useful resource. The RFL may be able to advise on counselling options.

**5.11 SUPPORT FOR THE ALLEGED PERPETRATOR**

Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to the alleged perpetrator of the abuse.

Additional information is available on request from the RFL.