

# Safeguarding Newsletter August 2018

## The Child Protection In Sport Unit (CPSU)

### Parents in Sport Week

1 – 7 October 2018

Please put the date in your diary and plan activities for the week. Please let us know what you are planning to do so that we can promote your good practice and share with the CPSU.

*CPSU Key aims are:*

#### **1. Ensure parents recognise their role in keeping children safe in sport**

***It's a big decision for parents to leave their child in the care of someone else. We're asking sports organisations to provide the information that parents need to make an informed choice about the club or activity their child attends and what to do if they have a concern.***

Rugby League Clubs can do this by ensuring both players and parents are aware of the CWO role, who the person is and how to contact them. If you have a club house, then you should have your details (and photo) visible, on a wall or notice board. This information should also be easily accessible on your website – on the front page with a link to the Safeguarding Section of the RFL website. Your website is your opportunity to demonstrate the work you do around safeguarding. You can talk about how your club takes part in safer recruitment, has licenced coaches, listening club etc. You can include the things that you would want to know if you were taking your child to a sports club that you knew nothing about.

#### **2. Help parents understand how to positively influence their child's enjoyment and wellbeing in sport**

***We're encouraging parents to look at how their behaviour and involvement influences their child's enjoyment of sport, through the resources on our website.***

***Sports will be asked to help create a positive environment for children and parents in sport by having a no tolerance policy on poor parental behaviour.***

This is something that we believe we all want for our junior players. The CPSU website has information and resources that would be useful to you. I would suggest that you display the comments your players have said from the listening club sessions. Talk about what they like to see and what they don't. If you have not asked them questions directly about the touchline, then you could do a session on this before Parents in Sport Week to let parents know what their children want. Even the simple question of why you play will show that winning is not the main reason most children enjoy their sport – it is the social aspect. Let parents know your findings – children may not want to or be able to tell their parents they do not like their vocal support or criticisms of themselves, teammates and match officials.

To ensure children continue to play our and other sports, we must adopt a no tolerance policy on poor parental behaviour and touchline behaviour. The role of Touch Line Manager is key here. Make sure that you have a person doing this role who will challenge effectively and that being TLM is their primary role, not that of a parent watching their child play. Too often we have complaints that the TLM is the instigator in touchline abuse!

**3. Encourage clubs to engage and involve parents in their child's sport how they will engage directly with parents. Why not try something new. It could be an event for parents, or a change in policy that ensures parents are more involved in the sporting lives of their children.**

If you have any examples of good practice to demonstrate here – please email [safeguarding@rfl.uk.com](mailto:safeguarding@rfl.uk.com) so that we can share this in our newsletter and with the CPSU. If you have parents who are abusive on the touchline and criticise the match official, try having a quiz on the rules of the game. If you have any fun days planned over the summer, please consider opportunities to engage parents in a positive way that will help junior players enjoy their game.

**Get involved.**

**We'll be asking sports to share their efforts to involve parents during the week with the hashtag #InvolvingParents on social media.**

**Again, this year, we'll be promoting the work we do to help sports engage with parents, and the great work with parents that's already happening across sport. On social media, search for the hashtags #ParentsInSportWeek2018 and #SportsParents.**

Please speak with your committee and junior players (through listening club sessions) to get everyone onboard with the Parents in Sport Week. If you would like any advice and guidance on events you are planning, please email [safeguarding@rfl.uk.com](mailto:safeguarding@rfl.uk.com)

### **Listening Club**

This is a reminder to send in your findings from your sessions. We are aware that many are taking place but CWOs are not sending in their session findings and photos. You will need to do this to receive the Listening Club Certificate for this year. At this point in the year you should have completed at least one session – if you have not done this can you do this over the summer? We are currently updating the spreadsheet on 'Listening Clubs' and where clubs are up to on this; we want to make sure we have you on record as carrying these out before we contact you directly.

Clubs that actively listen to the wants, wishes and concerns of players improve the environment for junior players and contribute to children both enjoying and feeling safe playing rugby league.

### **Reporting and Acting on Concerns**

We are aware that many CWOs are confident in reporting concerns to Children's Social Care when issues with children and families arise. The Safeguarding Team are available for advice on how to do this, but if you report directly, could you send an email to [safeguarding@rfl.uk.com](mailto:safeguarding@rfl.uk.com) so that we can securely hold this information should the child and family move clubs.

### **Parents are great for sport**

**(taken from the CPSU Parents in Sport Week)**

Everyone involved in sport for young people should be committed to ensuring that children's participation is supported.

Why parents are important

Parents are important to sport because they can:

- encourage their children to take up, enjoy and achieve in their sport
- support their children in practical ways – such as by providing transport or buying kit
- help out with activities
- become coaches, helpers and volunteers within the club
- help out with things such as club websites and fundraising
- support and motivate their child and/or the team
- reinforce positive aspects of sports participation
- Helping children reach their full potential

To continue to ensure a child reaches their full potential and enjoys their time playing sport, parents need to consider:

- what do they want their child to get out of sport? Is it the same as what their child wants?
- do they understand what their child is trying to achieve and what support they need to achieve it?
- are they being the best role model they can be to help their child enjoy their sporting experience?
- are they focused on their child's development and enjoyment?

One young person said:

“My dad's the best role model I could ask for. He was always on the touchline giving me great support and always encouraging me on – really good, really positive. He's just an inspiration for me.”

### **Negative effects of Parents in Sport**

Parents can invest a lot of time and effort in supporting their child to play rugby league. Sometimes the reasons why the child is playing can get 'lost' as parents can be overly enthusiastic at games. Parents may believe that the child is playing to win, but children do not always have the same degree of competition that Parents and Coaches expect from them. If a child's primary aim is to have a good time, parents, coaches, casual spectators can ruin this experience.

If a parent or coach are continually criticising or shouting instructions to children, then this can have negative consequences such as:

It reduces problem solving skills and reduces creativity in young players

If a child is constantly receiving instructions, then they cannot concentrate on 'their' game. They may receive conflicting instructions from the coach and the parent. Let parents know how you expect them to behave at training and games – their role is to provide praise to ALL players, on their child's team and the opposition.

It decreases decision making skills and it can prevent children from mastering life skills

If a child is enjoying their game they will learn more from this enjoyment than from any amount of shouting/words of advice from the touchline.

It reduces the child's enjoyment

Children often tell us that they feel embarrassed by their parents or coaches shouting and losing their temper. Although some children may be able to speak to their parents after a game about this – a lot cannot. It is up to the club to ensure that children are not subject to abuse or constant criticism. Make sure your Touchline

Managers are aware that they should report concerns to the CWO if particular parents are overly vocal or critical of their child. If this happens, the Coach and CWO should meet with the parents and explain the concerns and consequences for their child, the team and the club. You should have a written recording of the meeting should the behaviour continue.

It increases the pressure on the child and can increase anxiety

All children should enjoy playing, if they are worried about how parents will react this will put undue pressure on them and they may become anxious and stop playing. Children should feel that they will be supported when playing and training and that they will receive praise throughout.

It decreases the ability of the child to cope independently (particularly if the parent and the coach are not around)

Children need to learn to be independent in thoughts and actions, they can develop by being allowed to make mistakes and learn from them. Parents and coaches are there to help them in a supportive, positive way, at an appropriate time and place.

### **What parents can do to support their child**

Dr. Camilla Knight, an associate professor of sports science at Swansea University and a consultant to the CPSU, explains how important parents are in supporting young kids in their sport experiences. She developed the following tips for parents who are raising young athletes:

- Talk to your child to ensure you and your child have the same goals and expectations for sport. Remember these goals may change over time so frequent conversations are a must!
- Take time to learn about your child's sport and understand the role it plays in their life. Strive to demonstrate this understanding through all your actions.
- Recognize the huge range of benefits your child can gain from being involved in sport to help you keep winning and losing in perspective.
- Ask your child what they would like you to do and say before, during, and after competitions, and then try to do it!

Finally, remember that your child is an individual and no one else will have exactly the same sporting journey; avoid comparing to others and instead focus on your own child's progress and improvements.

You can access the video by clicking here

[https://youtu.be/g9K5bhefo\\_0](https://youtu.be/g9K5bhefo_0)

### **REDUCING THE POTENTIAL FOR VULNERABILITY**

(taken from the RFL Safeguarding policy. You can access the policy by clicking here <http://media.rugby-league.com/docs/RFL%20Safeguarding%20Policy%202018.pdf>)

When thinking about danger signs of grooming it is important to recognise that both boys and girls are groomed and/or sexually abused. 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 ensures 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

## **RELATIONSHIPS 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 relationships 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 and club officials) are in a relationship 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 relationship of trust with another Child where they have taken on a leadership role.

## **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.

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, organizations 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
- Telling the child that it's normal

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 immediately.

### **Courses & Contact Details**

SPC courses are advertised here <https://www.coachwisebooker.com/RFL/desktopdefault.aspx>

For Time to Listen (TTL) courses, please email [safeguarding@rfl.uk.com](mailto:safeguarding@rfl.uk.com)

DBS applications – you can complete your form by clicking here [http://www.rugby-league.com/the\\_rfl/child\\_player\\_welfare/dbs](http://www.rugby-league.com/the_rfl/child_player_welfare/dbs)

DBS queries should be emailed to [alan.smith@rfl.uk.com](mailto:alan.smith@rfl.uk.com)

For general safeguarding queries, please email [safeguarding@rfl.uk.com](mailto:safeguarding@rfl.uk.com)