

Safeguarding Newsletter

March 2018

Rugby League Listening Club Initiative

As teams are regularly training and playing games now, we would expect that Listening sessions are taking place. Please see safeguarding@rfl.uk.com If you would like any guidance on this, please contact Colette Eden on 0113 237 5046 or email Colette.eden@rfl.uk.com

Alfrieda Kinson from Salford City Roosters attended the Annual Conference and as a result conducted her first Listening provided this feedback:

"I have to be honest with you, when my fellow CWO and I attended the Safeguarding Conference in Halifax in January and we were required to take on the "Listening Club" project, our hearts sank!

Well, last week we sat down with our Under 9s team - not knowing how it would work out, whether or not they would be interested for half an hour while we droned on about things that they probably couldn't care less about. How wrong we were. It was and we learned a lot. We know that they love our Club; they have made great friends here; they love training, but would prefer longer; they love games; they love winning too - but it doesn't matter if they get beat; they like their playing kit, but would prefer pink on it (sponsor's logo), they think their coach is great, and they just love sausages!

It was very rewarding to hear that this group of children, from all backgrounds, felt safe in our environment, and enjoyed the made which would probably last for many years.

Next in line will be our Under 12s. A different kettle of fish no doubt - but we will listen to what they have to say and, hopefully content as the Under 9s. If they do have any issues they will at least know that we have listened to them and will try to change have highlighted.

It is a great project - and every club should take part and listen to what the children have to say."

A reminder about why this is important for you to do:

- Young people should be consulted on their experiences of rugby league and their experiences within your club
- Children will be more likely to stay in the club if they feel a part of it. They are your future volunteers?
- If you listen to children and young people AND ACT on their concerns or ideas, then they will be more likely to not have worries or issues.
- Young people have great ideas and simple solutions – adults can often get tied up in sorting something out and see an easy way around things.
- Retention of young players should improve because you are meeting their needs.
- Your committee can focus on the issues that young people say matter to them – not what we think are the issues
- From the Listening Club you can identify candidates for player representation on the committee or set up a young player committee
- Communicating effectively with junior players may enable them to identify issues and report them before they become a problem

Yorkshire Juniors League Welfare Officers (LWOs)

Yorkshire Juniors have appointed three Welfare Officers to assist Yorkshire clubs in all matters Safeguarding and Child Welfare. We do not want to prevent any person reporting directly to the RFL, you may find the new LWOs are better placed to assist you in this. Their role is to help you and to report any concerns to the Safeguarding Team if appropriate (they would keep you informed and referred to the RFL).

The three Officers are Paul Harrison, Jason Woodman and Helen Senior. They share an email address, and you can contact

leaguwelfare@yorkshirejuniors.co.uk

The importance of Safer Recruitment - an example from our sport.

Michael Hunter was involved in rugby league and received a Temporary Suspension Order when he did not comply with the safer recruitment (holding a current RFL enhanced DBS). His sentencing this month shows the importance of carrying out checks on those who wish to volunteer and work within our sport. You can read the article about Hunter and his convictions here

<https://www.wigantoday.net/news/former-borough-sport-coach-jailed-for-child-sex-offences-1-9041602>

The club involved worked closely with the RFL and as soon as concerns arose Hunter was removed from working with children.

This is a timely reminder as the season starts to ensure that all those who take part in regulated activity have gone through the following:

An interview (this may be informal, but you should record the meeting)

References from previous roles (ideally, from within Rugby League, or any sport they have been involved in)

An RFL enhanced DBS

All volunteers who work with children should be routinely monitored – remember, a DBS will tell you if there are previous convictions, but observation will tell you if the person is suitable to work with children – observation will tell you this. If a person is a bully/aggressive/likely to use abusive language, you will witness this through routine observation/monitoring and not from a DBS.

If a child ever discloses that they are uncomfortable around a volunteer or reports ANY concern, then this must be addressed. Clubs should seek advice and guidance from the safeguarding team. You can contact Colette Eden on 0113 237 5046/075955206 or email safeguarding@rfl.uk.com

Reporting Injuries (including concussion)

Reminder that any injuries sustained by players, coaches or spectators must be reported to the RFL at atcompetitions@rfl.uk.com

this should include the name of the person, date of injury, nature of the injury, action taken.

Forms for reporting a serious injury or accident can be downloaded here. http://www.rugby-league.com/get_involved/club_safeguarding

DBS and Verification

This is an important reminder that when an applicant completes their online DBS application they need to identify a verifier. Clubs should not wait to hold 'verification' nights which may mean a person begins their application and does not get it verified for several weeks. As part of safer recruitment, applicants should complete this process as quickly as possible and they should be responsible for identifying a verifier and progressing this in a timely manner.

All applicants on the system that have not been verified are removed after a three-month period and the person will need to re-apply for a new application.

The RFL will be launching its new first course from April 2018

The new RFL Emergency First Aid Course is a fully recognised Emergency First aid at Work (EFAW) course with extra rugby which will prepare volunteers for their work pitch-side. The course also covers RFL requirements regarding the management of spinal injuries. This course also provides volunteers with a nationally recognised qualification at level 3 that is transferable to other sports.

Booking on to the courses will be done via the Coachwise Booker system (<https://www.coachwisebooker.com/RFL/desktop>)

Further information on dates, venues and course price will be provided as soon as the courses go live.

Duration: 1 day (7 hours)

Course Fee: TBC

Requirements: Candidates must be 16+

SAFEGUARDING & JUNIOR MATCH OFFICIALS

Verbal, Emotional and Physical Abuse

The RFL encourages young people to take up refereeing at an early age and this is intended to be an enjoyable and positive experience. However, coaches, club officials, players, parents/spectators in both adult and junior Rugby League often lose sight of the fact that a match official who is under 18 is still legally a child! As a consequence, young match officials are open to experiencing abuse verbally, physically and emotionally. This behaviour is not acceptable in adult, junior or youth Rugby League. The increased verbal, physical and emotional abuse that children and young people in these roles need to be recognised. Remember a young Match Official is 'the child in the middle'

It is important that clubs acknowledge their role in ensuring that club officials, coaches, players and spectators behave appropriately towards young people who take on match officials' roles. It is necessary to recognise that, like adults, children and young people can make mistakes when they are learning, and overly critical and unsupportive responses may constitute verbal and or emotional abuse.

Some young match officials have experienced physical abuse from coaches, spectators and players. Please make use of the RFL Code of Conduct to guide appropriate behaviour and ensure those who fail to adhere to their code are dealt with accordingly.

Remember failing to take action means you can become part of the problem! Everyone has a duty of care to all children in contact with the game.

Inappropriate behaviour unchallenged can often become the norm – everyone needs to take responsibility for creating and maintaining positive and supportive environments for children and young people involved in Rugby League, whatever their role. Young people should be provided with advice on safeguarding and reporting inappropriate behaviour. Unfortunately, too often young match officials experience verbal and emotional abuse is "part of the game", this is not the case and adults within Match Officials Societies and Clubs must not condone it. Match officials are encouraged to report such abuse to the RFL.

Communicating responsibly with young Match Officials U18

Many young people play a significant role as match officials, their role could create additional vulnerability if we do not ensure that their interactions with adults are carried out appropriately both on and off the field and in the online environment.

They are likely to need to communicate frequently with other colleagues and the RFL recognises that the use of social networking sites and message boards may form an integral part of these communications and may be beneficial to their professional development. Making effective use of these mediums is a positive step as long as it's done appropriately.

It's important that we recognise they are not 'adults' and as such we have a responsibility to safeguard them as we do any other children involved in Rugby League. Following this guidance will put in place helpful safeguards.

Read the RFL's guidance on social media and communication and make sure that it is applied.

Match Officials Societies (MOS) Meetings & Training Sessions

By the nature of a club environment children and young players are in different teams to adults however in most MOS children and adults will meet and train together. It is important that good safeguarding principles are applied at all times, for instance shower and change in a separate facility or separate time to adult match officials.

Transport

The RFL guidance on transport also applies to junior match officials. Any Match Official who takes a young Match Official to a match must ensure that there has been parental consent for this to happen. Young Match Officials should be picked up in a mutually agreeable car and should sit in the rear seat of the car. Match Officials should ensure that they take the young Match Official straight to the venue for their other duties or chores whilst transporting young people. If more than one young Match Official is being transported, then all should be made to pick them up and drop them off at the same point together.

Mentors

The mentoring of young match officials is particularly helpful in supporting them if they are faced with abusive behaviour and the continuation of such behaviour. The mentor's role is to support, assist and help the young referee develop their confidence and provide effective guidance. They can offer support should the young referee be subjected to abusive side-line behaviour and be on hand to provide support. The mentor should develop a relationship that is open and honest and encourages the young Match Official to discuss any concerns they have around touchline behaviour and reporting. It's vitally important the mentor ensures the referee is able to enjoy the game and play with the players.

The mentor role should be clearly defined and should never involve the mentor being on their own with a young match official.

Relationships of Trust

The RFL Safeguarding Policy rules on Relationships of Trust apply to match officials as much as any other Relationship of Trust. All match officials taking a leadership, coaching and/or mentoring role must ensure that they are fully aware of these Rules.

Referees contact details

Mobile phone and email contact details for match officials under the age of 18 should not be hosted on Web Pages that can be accessed by the general public and must be held securely and displayed within private areas for the purpose of the activities they are undertaken. This is with the permission of their parent/carer.

The RFL recommends the following as best practice in relation to communication with junior match officials.

- 1 Signed parental/carer consent should be given prior to email, social networking and mobile phone communications with junior match officials. Ideally the adult(s) who will be communicating in this way should be named. The purpose for the communication should be stated.
- 2 Both parties should only communicate for the purpose of their refereeing role.

3 Email communications between the parties should copy in a named designated person (this could be parent/carer or Society Welfare Officer)

4 Leagues appointing young referees to games should copy in another league official, parent or carer to their commun

If any inappropriate communication or content is shared between an adult and an U18 this should be reported immediately to Society Welfare Officer or the RFL Safeguarding Manager who, where necessary, will seek advice from the statutory agency

Reducing the Potential for Vulnerability

In view of the above it is important for both Match Officials Societies and Clubs to be extra vigilant in creating a safe culture

Acknowledging that abusive behaviour directed towards a minor whilst they are refereeing is not acceptable and will be appropriate designated person as poor practice and/or abuse

Raising awareness of what discriminatory bullying is, how you will respond and ensure effective reporting systems are in place for members to report incidents

Implementation of a club code of conduct for spectators and players

Acceptance of the special role club officials have in setting a good example of the way in which people should behave to young people in leadership roles.

It's recognised that empowering children and young people helps to protect them; ensure your Match Officials Society is a listening club by effectively communicating with its young members and listening to their needs and suggestions for change. You can access Club guidance here http://www.rugby-league.com/the_rfl/child_player_welfare

The Government has relaunched its Together We Can Tackle Child Abuse campaign and you can find very useful information here <https://tacklechildabuse.campaign.gov.uk/>

If you go to the site, you can find information on the types of abuse and signs to look out for.

CWO Registration

This is a final reminder that all Club Welfare Officers should have registered with the RFL Safeguarding Team for the 2018 season for all existing and new CWOs. It is important that the Safeguarding Team know the CWO/s and lead for the coming year and if registered, you can do so from this link

http://www.rugby-league.com/the_rfl/child_player_welfare/safeguarding_children/club_welfare_officers

Positions of Trust

All those who are paid or volunteer within rugby league, in a 'position of trust' must demonstrate appropriate behaviour and are upheld in all activities. Roles that would be considered to be a Position of Trust would include, but is not limited to Coaches, CWOs, Team Managers and Supervisors, Physios, First Aiders etc. Coaches in particular need to ensure they understand the influence they may have over the children and young people they are coaching. In a competitive environment this dependence is increased. The relationship, is no different to that between a school teacher and pupils in their care. Although children over 16 consent to sexual activity, it is a breach of the RFL Safeguarding Policy for an adult in a position of trust to engage in a relat

and would be subject to disciplinary action. Whilst the coach-athlete relationship exists, coaches must not enter into an intimate relationship with athletes under the age of 18. In some cases, the relationship could be considered criminal and would be referred to the police.

The Sports Minister, Tracey Crouch, has announced that sexual relationships between sports coaches and 16- and 17-year-olds will be made illegal. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/42018265>

Social Media

The Safeguarding and Protecting Children course (SPC) and the Time to Listen (TTL) course explain the importance of communicating with young people under the age of 18. Children and young people should never be contacted individually, directly, via any social media. Any messages should be sent via a group and include parents where appropriate and a club official – ideally the CWO. Any inappropriate communication privately with children or young people should be immediately reported to the Safeguarding Team. Please refer to the RFL Social Media Policy

<http://media.rugby-league.com/docs/Good%20Practice%20Guidelines%20on%20the%20use%20of%20Social%20Media>

Time To Listen Course – Hull

Monday 16th April at KCOM Craven Park (Hull KR), Preston Road, Hull, HU9 5HE.

If you would like to book onto this course, please email Julie.turton@rfl.uk.com who will send you a booking form to complete and pay.

Contact:

If you require any further information or have any questions on the content of this newsletter, please email Colette.eden@rfl.uk.com

