

A Rugby League Coaches
Guide to

Child Protection



RFL

www.rfl.uk.com

RUGBY LEAGUE. It's a whole different ballgame[®]

Introduction

Quality coaching is the key factor in raising participation levels and playing standards throughout the game. In recognition of this, the Rugby League Coach Education Programme (RLCEP) has been redesigned and redeveloped. It focuses on the needs of the player at the different levels of the game and aims to provide coaches with the ability to meet those needs.

The RLCEP is the vehicle that will provide the impetus to drive the game of rugby league forward.

The RLCEP matches the necessary National Standards for Coaching, Teaching and Instructing, which means that every coach on every course is receiving a quality assured programme of education.

We have also worked closely and within recognised guidelines to ensure that the standards of tutoring and resource materials are the very best available.

This has helped us to offer a range of delivery mechanisms on each course, ranging from home study materials to courses delivered in an interactive style which facilitates various mediums of adult learning.

Each course consists of pre and on-course learning opportunities and is underpinned by sessions and periods of applied practice.

The Programme is underpinned by qualifications at four distinct levels. Catering for coaches that assist others, work in The Modified Game, introduce and develop players in the 13 a side game or indeed Lead, Manage and provide cutting edge solutions working at a senior level and with the games elite athletes.

Each license is current for three years after issue.

In order to keep license current, coaches will be expected to demonstrate ongoing professional development. The Rugby League Coach Education Programme through its Think Coaching Programme can facilitate further learning to assist the coach in their development.

There are two key objectives of the RLCEP:

- To support and develop coaches through improved access to coach education
- To have a positive effect on future playing standards through better and more informed coaching

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ray Unsworth', written in a cursive style.

Ray Unsworth
Coach Education Director

Foreword

Sport and its environments have a very powerful and in the main a positive influence on young people. There is a rightful expectation that children will be protected from abuse and harm in the environments we create within the game of Rugby League. This is underpinned by the existence of a legal and moral responsibility to protect young people in sport.

Rugby League has forged strong links with relevant agencies, and is in a position to inform and train appropriately in order to ensure best practice across the sport. This guide assists this process by promoting welfare provision as an issue in a way that should help a coach create an opportunity for enjoyment and achievement in the sport, but in addition it will also help in addressing issues centred on coach vulnerability.

A separately produced document entitled The Rugby League Child Protection Policy and Implementation Procedures is now installed across the game at all levels and in all sectors. This will help in the continuing creation of reassuring environments that will attract more young people into Rugby League.

Steve Fairhurst

Rugby Football League Equity and Ethics Officer

Copyright © Rugby League Coach Education Programme 2005
West Yorkshire House, 4 New North Parade, Huddersfield HD1 5JP
Telephone: 01484 424 335 Email: coaching@rfl.uk.com

This pack is copyright under the Berne Convention. All rights are reserved.

Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, electrical, chemical, mechanical, optical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner. Enquiries should be addressed to the Rugby League Coach Education Programme.

Compiled by Haydn Walker, Steve Fairhurst and Ray Unsworth

Edited by Vinny Webb

This manual is a product of a tremendous amount of work in Rugby League Coach Education. The Rugby League Coach Education Programme would like to acknowledge the work of the many people who have contributed to Coach Education over the years.

We would like to acknowledge the support we receive from Sport England.

Coaches Responsibilities

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- A safe environment must be created
- Children must be protected from harm, discrimination and degrading treatments
- The rights and wishes of children must be respected

In order for the coach to be able to meet his / her responsibilities an understanding of the following is needed.

- How to promote Good Practice
- Recognise and define Child Abuse
- Be Vigilant and be able to recognise the signs of child abuse.
- Be able to respond using appropriate procedures and actions

Promoting Good Practice

- All staff must operate within an accepted ethical framework
- Coaches' must sign up to and adhere to the Rugby League Coaches Code of Conduct
- Display equitable practice

The Coach - A Position of Trust

An example of good practice:

- The welfare and safety of the child is the primary concern. Winning is less important than these.
- Be aware that closeness may encourage feelings that are not directly related to the sport
- Set out and maintain appropriate boundaries
- Promote fairness, deal with bullying
- Treat all children equally, with dignity and respect
- Always give enthusiastic and constructive advice rather than criticism
- Encourage a child's independence

Positions of Trust

Unacceptable Behaviour

You must never:

- Enter into a sexual relationship with a child under your care/supervision
- Use your influence over a child for your own interests

The Coach and Physical Contact

Good Practice

Physical contact in Rugby League should be for one of the following purposes:

- to develop or demonstrate sports skills
- to diagnose or treat an injury

These should only be carried out by appropriately qualified staff

- Physical contact is appropriate in other circumstances, as in consoling a child who is upset, or administering first aid. But in doing so always ensure a culture of openness.
- Interpretations of touching will be affected by factors such as cultural differences, religious implications, relative age and sexual orientation

General Supervision

Good Practice

- You must work in pairs if groups of children have to be supervised in changing rooms or hotels, etc.
- Mixed teams must always be accompanied by male and female responsible adults

Unacceptable Behaviour

- Do not spend time alone with a child
- Do not take a child alone on a journey without prior consent
- Do not enter the room of a child without another responsible adult present
- Never share a room with a child
- Do not allow rough or sexually provocative games or inappropriate touching or talking in any group for which you are responsible

Safety

Good Practice

- Always ensure the safety of the child
- Study the Risk Assessment carefully prior to the activity
- The work done should be in keeping with regular and approved practice within Rugby League
- Ensure that the location is secure from access by unauthorised third parties, and be vigilant!
- Ensure all activities are suitable for the experience and ability of the child
- Ensure that parents have been informed, and consent has been obtained
- Keep a written record of any injury
- Ensure that all staff adhere to the ethical guidelines (Equity Policy, Rugby League Coaches Code of Conduct, etc)

The Coach and Confidentiality

Good Practice

- Where you are close to a child, you may gather very personal information about the child
- Try to make the child aware of the importance and implications of the information he is sharing

Unacceptable Behaviour

- You should never encourage confidences, or intrude into the private life of the child. However it may be necessary to disclose information to a responsible third party, and examples may include;
- The pursuit of disciplinary or legal action relating to alleged breaches of the games Child Protection policy
- The evaluation of the child's performance in Rugby League

The Coaches Integrity

Good Practice

- Always remember that a child may not have the same awareness of the importance and implications of what is being said as an adult
- Discourage children from talking offensively about others, but be aware that he may be trying to describe an instance of abuse
- Encourage children to obey the rules of the sport, and compete in good faith, and treat officials and other competitors with respect
- Emphasise fair play!

Unacceptable Behaviour

- Never advocate measures to gain an unfair advantage or cheat in any way
- Never allow children in your care to do this

Co-operation

Good Practice

- Communicate and co-operate with other sports and allied professions when you feel it is in the best interests of the child
- Involve medical and other appropriate practitioners if a child has problems in these areas

The Coaches Personal Standards

Good Practice

- Always display high personal standards
- Always project a favourable image of the sport and the National Governing Body (RFL)
- Always project an image of health, cleanliness and efficiency

Unacceptable Behaviour

- Do not smoke or drink alcohol to excess when in the company of children
- Never use profane, insulting or otherwise offensive language
- Never use any form of sexually charged verbal intimacy or innuendoes to or about children

The Coach Working with Parents

Good Practice

- Encourage parents/guardians to get involved wherever possible and appropriate
- Keep them fully informed
- Encourage the child to keep his parents fully informed of his/ her activities

Discipline & Sanctions

- From time to time discipline will be necessary!
- Always promote appropriate Codes of Conduct for players to adhere to.
- Be aware of the sanctions procedures
- Remember that the child must be represented in any disciplinary procedure
- Remember to keep written records
- Inform parents

Coach - If you are unsure.....

- If you are unsure of what is appropriate or necessary in the particular circumstance, you should ask the person in charge, the club welfare officer or the Rugby Football Leagues Child Protection Officer for guidance
- If during your care you accidentally hurt a child, or a child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions, or if the child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report this as soon as possible to a colleague, and make a note of it.
Parents should also be informed

Defining Child Abuse

Physical
Emotional
Sexual
Neglect

Abuse in all forms can affect a child at any age. The effects can be damaging, and may have long-lasting consequences.

Physical Abuse

- Physical injury of all types
- Giving a child alcohol or inappropriate drugs
- In a sports situation, this may also occur when the nature and intensity of training disregard the capacity of the child's immature and growing body
- Bullying

Emotional Abuse

- May involve telling a child that he/she is useless, devaluing them
- Constant criticism and negative feedback
- Shouting, threats or taunts, leading to fear
- Expectation of performance at levels above their capability
- Bullying

Neglect

- Failure to provide adequate food or shelter
- Exposure to cold or heat
- Unnecessary risk of injury
- Insufficient attention to safety

Sexual Abuse

- In sport, activities which might involve physical contact with children may create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed
- The power of the coach over the athlete could, if misused, lead to abusive situations developing

The Coach - Being Vigilant...

- Watch for signs of abuse, and of bullying
- Note changes in behaviour
- Drop in performance
- Physical symptoms and signs

Action

- It is not your responsibility to decide if abuse is taking place
- However, it IS your responsibility to act on and report concerns

Your Response

- Stay calm
- Reassure the child
- Listen
- Ensure the safety of the child
- Record all the information
- Report the incident to the clubs welfare officer or the Rugby Football League Child Protection Officer
- Maintain confidentiality - who needs to know ?

Remember...

- The effects of abuse may have very long-lasting consequences for the child
- The welfare of the child is paramount
- A safe environment must be created
- The rights and wishes of children must be respected
- Children must be protected from harm, discrimination and degrading treatments

Code of Practice for Sports Coaches

Key Principles

Rights - coaches must respect and champion the rights of every individual to participate in sport.

Relationships - coaches must develop a relationship with athletes (and others) based on openness, honesty, mutual trust and respect.

Responsibilities: personal standards - coaches must demonstrate proper personal behaviour and code at all times.

Responsibilities: professional standards - to maximise benefits and minimise the risks to athletes, coaches must attain a high level of competence through qualifications and a commitment to ongoing training that ensures safe and correct practice.

scUK Code of Practice for Sports Coaches (2005)

Good Practice and Child Protection

Now you have read the workbook test your knowledge and understanding of good practice and child protection issues. The task utilises a card system, much like the traffic lights on the road.

Read the scenario, there are eight altogether, think about what you have just read and apply a 'Card' to identify good, poor or questionable practice. Your answers will be discussed on the course with the tutor, so don't worry too much if you cannot decide on the 'Card' to use, just have a go!

Complete the following scenario cards utilising the cards to identify:

Red Card = **Poor practice**

Amber Card = **Could be questionable**

Green Card = **Good Practice**

Good Practice and Child Protection...

Give it the Card!

Number 1

An U14 team is scheduled by the League to play on consecutive Saturdays week in week out but has now had a cup replay placed in a midweek slot too.



Number 2

A young player turns up late for training and after being shouted at by the coach is sent away alone to complete 5 laps of the main pitch as a punishment.



Number 3

As a Coach you arrive early for training and inspect the playing area, and check and clean all the equipment required for the session.



Number 4

As an U15 team Coach you leave 24 cans of beer in the changing rooms for your team to help them celebrate winning a cup final.



Number 5

In order to assist in developing skills you feel the need to use physical contact with junior players.



Number 6

As a club you develop a procedure that sees all coaches working in pairs when taking sessions/activities, and supervising in changing facilities.



Number 7

You take a lone child home on your own after training.



Number 8

You emphasise FAIR PLAY at all times



RUGBY LEAGUE

IT'S A WHOLE DIFFERENT BALLGAME[®]



RFL

West Yorkshire House
4 New North Parade
Huddersfield HD1 5JP

Tel: 01484 424335
Fax: 01484 514297
Email: coaching@rfl.uk.com