



SAFEGUARDING & PROTECTING CHILDREN IN RUGBY LEAGUE

Newsletter 12 – May 2008

“The Child’s Welfare is Paramount”

INVESTIGATION OF SAFEGUARDING CASES

We had hoped to have Gary Haigh, the RFL’s Chief Investigator as a speaker at the CWO Conference. Unfortunately due to family commitments Gary can’t attend so he has written about the investigation process for this month’s newsletter.

“In some cases when concerns are raised or allegations made about Safeguarding issues there is insufficient information available for the RFL Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG) to make a decision how to deal with the matter.

In order to obtain a clearer picture of events the SCMG sometimes requests to have the incident investigated.

The RFL have a team of Independent Investigators who all have long term experience in police and/or legal investigations. Some have also worked in the Safeguarding field. A suitable member of this team will be asked to make enquiries and carry out an investigation.

It is important to state at the outset that an investigation is not about proving guilt; the aim of any investigation must be to seek out the truth. It is human nature for us all to make assumptions which in some cases can be correct, in others it is only through undertaking a thorough and balanced investigation that a totally different picture will emerge. It is important to remember that an investigation can prove innocence as well as guilt. It must never be a witch hunt against any individual(s) or a particular Club.

The Investigator’s job is to obtain evidence of what has occurred. This can be done in many ways. In some cases photographs or film footage is available, in others there is documentary evidence, reports of occurrences, emails and notes that witnesses have made at the time or shortly after the incident when matters were still fresh in their minds.

The main evidence usually comes from eye witnesses; people who were actually there at the time of the incident and saw/heard what actually occurred. It is very helpful to the success of an investigation if any relevant evidence is secured at the time for later consideration. Investigators can contact witnesses by telephone, email or in person and then their agreed version of events is recorded in writing.

When all the evidence has been obtained the Investigator will arrange to interview the person or representative of the Club who the allegation has been made against. This person will already know about the investigation because the RFL send a letter of notification to anyone who is the subject of a formal investigation. The letter will include brief details of the allegation, the Regulation which is alleged to have been breached and an explanation of the investigatory process.

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The interview can take place anywhere, including at the person's home or at their Club. They have the right to have anyone they wish present to support them; usually a friend or official of their Club. They can of course have a Solicitor or other person with legal experience present if they wish. It is not appropriate for someone who is a witness in the case to be present at the interview as their subsequent evidence would then be compromised. If a child or young person is being interviewed then this would take place in the presence of a suitable responsible adult, usually their parent(s) and the Club's Club Welfare Officer.

Interviews are contemporaneously recorded by the Investigator. This is a method which safeguards both parties. Details of what witnesses have said are written down and read out. Questions are then asked about the allegation and the answers are also written down. During the interview the Investigator usually asks if there are any witnesses that the interviewee would like speaking to on their behalf. Details are also recorded. The Investigator will then see the witnesses and obtain their version of events. If their details are not known at the time the Investigator will make enquiries to trace them. The interviewee may also provide the Investigator with other evidence that will help their case, i.e. a DVD recording of the incident that they have obtained etc.

At the conclusion of the interview the notes are read by the interviewee, who will be given the opportunity to correct, alter or add anything they wish. Once agreed they are signed.

All the evidence is then put together in a file which is sent back to the RFL's Safeguarding Officer who will arrange for the papers to be considered by the RFL SCMG. After considering the papers the possible outcomes are:

- 1) No case to answer
- 2) Further training and support are needed
- 3) The person involved should be given further advice/warning as to future conduct
- 4) The case is referred to a Panel for disciplinary sanctions which may include exclusion from the game.

It is important to point out that the Investigators always try to be as fair, sensitive and discreet as possible when undertaking investigations. An Investigation will only take place if it is deemed to be in the best interest of the child or the best future interest of children."

CWO CONFERENCE

The CWO Conference will be held on Sunday 27 July 2008 prior to the Carnegie Challenge Cup Semi Final to be played that day. The venue for the semi final will be known after the draw and final details will be circulated direct on 3 or 4 June.

CRB FORMS

Over recent months we have seen a huge rise in the number of CRB forms being submitted which is great. However unfortunately a large proportion of forms – over 40% - have been returned to the applicant as they include simple mistakes.

The most common problem is with the evidence – in particular:

- insufficient evidence being checked

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- continuation forms not being used when needed
- all evidence details not being provided (valid from / issue date / date of birth)

The other main problem is with address history. A lot of people do not fill in continuation forms or leave gaps in their address history.

Can we make a plea to all CWOs to pay particular attention to these two areas before submitting CRB forms to the RFL. Remember if you aren't sure about anything contact Stacey to check.

TIME TO LISTEN (TTL)

This is a course specifically for Club Welfare Officers and goes into more detail regarding policies and procedures than Safeguarding & Protecting Children (SPC). Candidates must have completed SPC prior to attending TTL, unless they have prior experience or qualifications that match the learning objectives of TTL.

TTL will enable the participant to:

- Understand that there is a legislative framework to support the work of CWOs
- Define the specific roles and responsibilities of statutory agencies (Police, Children's Social Care Services and the NSPCC) and Local Safeguarding Children Boards and demonstrate skills in how they will relate to these agencies in individual cases of child abuse and poor practice.
- Clearly define the role and responsibilities of the Club Welfare Officer and its relationship to the RFL and Regional Welfare Officers.
- Gain more insight into the RFL's procedures.
- Meet other CWOs on the course
- Meet a Regional Welfare Officer
- Describe how the role will work in practice.

The RFL use Rugby League specific tutors to deliver Time To Listen, therefore making sure the content and case studies are relevant to Rugby League. This is an interesting and exciting course which will give CWOs greater confidence in their role.

To book a place on a Time To Listen course please call 0113 237 5036 or email safeguarding@rfl.uk.com. The course costs £15.

Presently we are only taking application from CWOs for this course, however, other volunteers may be added to the waiting list so that we can inform them, of local opportunities when appropriate.

TACKLE IT!

Tackle It! is the RFL's anti-racism policy which the RFL would like all clubs to sign up to. Enclosed with this newsletter is a Tackle It! policy statement with space to add your club's name at the top – this can be signed and displayed on your notice board to demonstrate your club's commitment in this area.

Children from minority ethnic groups may be more vulnerable to abuse and poor practice as they may:

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- 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.

YOUTH FORUM

The next Youth Forum is being held in Warrington during half term and a further two will be held before the end of July. When all this series of Youth Forums have been held we will use the information gathered to draw up a Children's Code of Conduct which will be published.

NEW RESOURCES

Two new RFL Safeguarding leaflets are enclosed.

- 1 Anti Bullying Policy – this is a leaflet format of the policy which was published with the October newsletter.
- 2 Rugby League Coach's Code of Conduct & Ethics – this is the Code of Conduct that all Rugby League coaches sign up to when they attend a coaching course. In order to remind coaches of the commitments they have made we thought it would be useful for you to have the Code in a format which can be handed out to your coaches prior to each season.

Please order copies of the leaflets which are free through Stacey Thompson.

OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT & OTHER CONTACT DETAILS

Emma Rosewarne emma.rosewarne@rfl.uk.com	Acting Lead Safeguarding Officer Direct Line 0113-237-5013 Mobile 07850 483736
Dean Hardman dean.hardman@rfl.uk.com	Deputy Safeguarding Officer & Lead Safeguarding Education Strategy Direct Line 0113-237-5041
Stacey Thompson stacey.thompson@rfl.uk.com	CRB Officer Direct Line 0113-237-5036

Emma Rosewarne's mobile number can be used as an emergency number to ask for support or to make an initial report of an incident at any time. Anybody who has an issue or a question can email the Operations team on the dedicated email address: safeguarding@rfl.uk.com

The NSPCC Child Protection Helpline is 0808 800 5000 - your Local Safeguarding Children Board will also be able to give advice in cases which you think needs statutory agency input.

The RFL would like to thank the CPSU and other sports, particularly the ECB & FA, for sharing their policies and templates and allowing the RFL to adapt materials for its own use.

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