



## **SAFEGUARDING & PROTECTING CHILDREN IN RUGBY LEAGUE**

### **Newsletter 18 – November 2008**

### **“The Child’s Welfare is Paramount”**

#### **ROBERT SKIRROW**

Many of you will have seen media reports that Robert Skirrow, a registered coach active in the junior game in West Yorkshire, has been sentenced to 15 months imprisonment after being found guilty of possessing indecent images of children. Robert Skirrow was suspended by the RFL in February as soon as the police informed the RFL of his arrest. There is no suggestion that any of the images involved any child in rugby league.

Skirrow had a clear enhanced CRB check dated August 2007. It was very important in dealing with the media to be able to say that all appropriate checks had been carried out – please think for a moment about the publicity a club would face in similar circumstances if there had not been a valid CRB in place.

It is also important to remember that CRB checks are not a panacea for all ills but are only part of a safe and effective recruitment policy which should include continuous monitoring of volunteers and ensuring that all volunteers adhere to the Safeguarding Policy.

#### **MESSAGE TO CLUB CHAIRS**

Over recent weeks we have discovered that there are a number of clubs who have appointed a CWO but that the CWO is either not registered with the RFL or we do not have a record of their contact details. In particular this seems to apply to CWOs appointed before August 2006. If you are a Club Chair reading this newsletter, please could you check that your CWO receives this newsletter? If they do not get a copy it is likely that they are not registered in which case they should contact Stacey, details at the end of this newsletter.

#### **TOUCH LINE BEHAVIOUR**

Unfortunately, since the start of the 2008-09 season, the RFL has already received a significant number of cases relating to coaching staff and spectators running onto the field of play and becoming involved in fights or brawls in some cases attacking children.

Obviously this is totally unacceptable and the RFL will investigate all such allegations and where there is evidence prosecute such cases under the Safeguarding Regulations. Adults found guilty of such attacks on children can expect to receive severe sentences usually a Permanent Suspension Order.

Clubs are responsible for the behaviour of coaches and spectators and all clubs can work to prevent incidents of this nature in particular by following the RESPECT guidelines. Some of the most important are:

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- Ensuring children are encouraged to play fairly with no toleration of foul play
- Using RESPECT barriers to give a clear demarcation between pitch and spectator areas
- Encouraging spectators to behave in a sporting manner – don't tolerate foul language and aggressive behaviour
- Making sure parents and volunteers understand the ethos of the club and what is unacceptable behaviour
- Supporting the touch line managers
- Making sure that all coaches at the club are aware of the Managing Challenging Behaviour Policy

Incidents involving an assault on a child should be reported to the police and/or the RFL.

### **REPORTING INCIDENTS**

Please find enclosed an incident report form. Wherever possible please use the form to report incidents to the RFL as it will act as a reminder of the information which we ideally require. However of course the vital thing is to report incidents and don't let missing information delay making a report to the Safeguarding Team.

### **REPORTING SERIOUS INJURIES**

Just a reminder that if a player suffers a serious injury at a game or training session that this should be reported to the RFL - the following are viewed as "serious injuries":

Broken neck or spine; Heart attack; Stroke; Incident in which a player stops breathing; Incident in which a player loses consciousness for a period of more than 5 minutes; Head injuries leading to surgery or a stay of more than 48 hours in hospital; Any other life threatening injury.

The injury should be reported by contacting the RFL as soon as possible after the match. In the most severe of cases contact should be made immediately on the emergency number below.

The RFL will inform the Benevolent Fund Serious Injuries Officer, Dave Phillips, who will make contact with the Player's family to see if there is any immediate support or practical assistance that the RFL or the RFL Benevolent Fund can offer. The RFL will also inform the relevant insurance brokers of the incident and deal with any requests for information from the media.

### **CASE MANAGEMENT OFFICER**

The RFL is pleased to report that Jason Askham has been appointed as the RFL Safeguarding Case Management Officer. Jason will work with the RFL on an *ad hoc* basis to assist in the management of ongoing Safeguarding cases. In particular the role will involve:

- Liaising with victims, complainants, witnesses, clubs and those against whom allegations are made to keep them up to date with the progress of cases
- Attending Safeguarding Case Management meetings – taking minutes and sending out correspondence

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- Assisting in dispute resolution
- Attending Multi Agency meetings to represent the RFL

We are sure that Jason's appointment will help to improve the way the RFL deals with cases, in particular providing more information and support to those involved in the process.

### **CRB CHECKS - PORTABILITY**

The RFL would like to remind everyone that only CRB checks which have been carried out through the RFL are valid within Rugby League. CRB checks from other organisations are unfortunately not acceptable. Disclosures issued by another body are called "ported" disclosures and the risk associated with them are detailed below.

- A higher level Disclosure (Standard and Enhanced) is by nature specific to a post applied for. Furthermore the local police force relevancy test is based on the post applied for with the possibility that the police may have decided not to release information for the original post that could be relevant to the ported post.
- The appropriate identity checks may not have been undertaken by the employing body.
- Relevant list checks may not have been requested for the original Disclosure when they could now be necessary and the applicant may also have been listed between the original issue date and the portability enquiry
- An applicant might commit an offence between the original Disclosure issue date and the Portability enquiry. These new and potentially relevant details would only be made known to the employer on a Disclosure if a fresh application were made.
- A 'ported' Disclosure is not evidence of identity. Unless the organisation using the 'ported' Disclosure adopts robust identity checking procedures there is no assurance that the person presenting the Disclosure is the person to whom the Disclosure was issued.
- There is the potential that the applicant's copy of the Disclosure could have been amended fraudulently.
- Additional information may have been released with the Disclosure which is not visible on the Disclosure. This must be checked with the issuing body
- Those not familiar with Disclosures may not recognise a genuine Disclosure nor realise that information may be on the reverse of the sheet, run to several sheets or on occasions be in a different format

### **PARENT/COACH RELATIONSHIPS**

The RFL has received a number of complaints about situations where a coach and parent appear to have fallen out leading to the child being excluded from the club. Clubs are reminded that the child's welfare is paramount and they should not be used as a pawn in a dispute between two adults. Where such a dispute occurs the CWO and other Committee Members should seek a resolution setting out clear guidelines for behaviour on both sides

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and all concerned must make sure that the child or children concerned are not harmed by the fall out.

## RELATIONSHIPS OF TRUST

*“The inequality at the heart of a relationship of trust should be ended before any sexual relationship begins.”* (Home Office 1999)

This statement recognises that genuine relationships do occur between the different levels of volunteers and participants in a group but that no intimate relationship should begin whilst the member of staff or volunteer is in a ‘position of trust’ over them.

The power and influence that an older member of staff has over someone attending a group or activity cannot be under-estimated. If there is an additional competitive aspect to the activity and the older person is responsible for the child’s success or failure to some extent, then the dependency of the younger member upon the older will be increased. It is therefore vital for volunteers to recognise these issues and to ensure that they do not abuse their positions of trust.

Children aged 16 can legally consent to sexual activity; however, in some provisions of legislation they are classified as children, and within this Safeguarding Policy it is misconduct for any volunteer or employee to enter into a sexual relationship with any child under the age of 18 involved in any way in Rugby League.

If you engage in an intimate or inappropriate relationship with a child with whom you are in a relationship of trust, regardless of whether they are legally able to consent or not, it is breach of the Safeguarding Policy and the Rugby League Code of Conduct and as such will result in disciplinary action.

## RUGBY LEAGUE SPECIFIC SAFEGUARDING & PROTECTING CHILDREN

The next Safeguarding & Protecting Children course is at Rylands Recreation Club, Warrington on Tuesday, 9 December 2008 from 6.30 pm to 9.30 pm. The course is free for CWOs registered with the RFL and £15 for anyone else. This course is recommended for all involved in working with children and is a foundation course for CWOs before attending a ‘Time to Listen’ course. To book a place, please contact Stacey details below.

## OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT & OTHER CONTACT DETAILS

Emma Rosewarne <a href="mailto:emma.rosewarne@rfl.uk.com">emma.rosewarne@rfl.uk.com</a>	<b>Acting Lead Safeguarding Officer</b> Direct Line 0113-237-5013	Mobile 07850 483736
Dean Hardman <a href="mailto:dean.hardman@rfl.uk.com">dean.hardman@rfl.uk.com</a>	<b>Deputy Safeguarding Officer &amp; Lead Safeguarding Education Strategy</b> Direct Line 0113-237-5041	
Stacey Thompson <a href="mailto:stacey.thompson@rfl.uk.com">stacey.thompson@rfl.uk.com</a>	<b>CRB Officer</b> 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](mailto: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.

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