



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

### **Newsletter 16 – September 2008**

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

#### **MODIFIED GAMES RULE BOOK**

The Modified Games Rule Book has been distributed to clubs and copies should be available for your coaching staff. A copy is enclosed for your personal use. The Rule Book covers the rules for Cub League, Mini League, Mod League, Mod Transition, Tag & Touch and the Rugby League Safe Play Code. Further copies are available from the RFL Coaching department at a cost of £2 per copy. Please contact the Coaching department on or 0113 237 5010 or [coaching@rfl.uk.com](mailto:coaching@rfl.uk.com).

#### **CLUB WEBSITES**

**(This advice was prepared for a group of major sports by independent lawyers)**

Websites are a key part of the daily operation of most clubs. They are probably the most flexible way to communicate with members, and to anyone interested in joining a club. They also have the potential to be a very safe way to communicate with children, given their wide accessibility.

However, in the same way that a club has responsibility for the physical safety of a junior member when visiting the club’s premises, that club must also ensure that there is nothing on its website which could harm a child, directly or indirectly. A club is responsible for the content of its website.

There are two key risks to guard against which are constant themes in the more detailed provisions in this guidance:

- 1 Disclosing personal information about a child to people accessing the website. This could be the child’s name, address, or any information about a child’s life, interests or activities which would help a stranger target a child, or engage that child in conversation.
- 2 Abusive or inappropriate content (photos, video or text), on the site itself or on linked sites.

#### ***Website content generally***

There are three main safeguarding risks associated with content:

- 1 Inappropriate content (for example violent, sexual or hateful content). Although it is possible to impose restrictions on access, it is overwhelmingly likely that children will be able to access all areas of a club’s website. Indeed, most clubs will positively want the website to generate interest among children. The risk applies both to text on the club’s website, and on any linked websites.

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- 2 Bullying. This could be material on the site which criticises or humiliates a child. It could also be information which places undue pressure on the child to participate in some aspect of a club's activities.
- 3 Disclosure of personal information of children which could lead to grooming.

### ***Blogs***

Weblogs (also known as Blogs) are a type of content which is becoming commonplace on websites. The creation of a blog is straightforward. It does not require technical or design expertise, and it can be updated remotely. Blogs present two particular challenges:

- 1 A central part of the attraction of a blog is that it is updated frequently. However the same risks apply to its content as apply to all other content on the site. A club cannot distance itself from the content of a blog it chooses to include on its site.
- 2 Blogs often contain a lot of opinion, as opposed to purely factual information.

### ***Linked sites***

Many sites contain links to other sites. This could be for commercial reasons, such as the sites of sponsors or advertisers, or simply to communicate information to be found on other websites. Before creating a link, a club should check thoroughly the content of the other website, both for safeguarding reasons, and to ensure the content poses no other risk to the club's reputation. Once a link is included on the site, the club should check its content periodically (the frequency of the checks depending on how frequently the content changes), and remove any link immediately if concerns arise.

An additional concern with linked commercial sites is inappropriate advertising or marketing aimed at children. The advertising industry is self-regulating through the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), and has produced detailed guidelines covering marketing to children.

### **Recommendations:**

- Content must be checked that is it appropriate to be seen by children, and that it does not have the potential to bully, before it is included on the website. Sometimes these decisions can be finely balanced. If there is any doubt, the text should not be included.
- The responsibility for checking content needs to be allocated clearly to individual(s) who understand properly the issues involved. This may well be the individual at the club with responsibility for safeguarding, but this is not essential. The individual should be familiar with this guidance.
- In the unusual circumstance that it is possible any content will go onto the website without being checked by someone else (such as a blog) the club must satisfy itself that the author is sufficiently aware of Safeguarding risks, and the content of this guidance, to be able to self-check effectively.
- If a club receives any complaints about content, it should remove the content in question immediately, and reinstate it only once the complaint has been resolved. A club needs to be able to react quickly in the event of any complaint.
- Personal information about children over and above the child's name should not feature on the website.

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- Links to another website should not be placed on a club’s website unless that club has checked the site’s content and is satisfied that the content is appropriate. It is good practice to discuss any proposed the link with the owner of the other website, and obtain the owner’s assurance that the linked site is designed to be suitable for children at all times of the day or night (some websites’ content is different and more adult during the night). If the linked site has marketing content aimed at children, the club should obtain a further assurance from the other website owner that it complies with ASA guidelines.
- The content of linked sites should be checked thoroughly at least once every 6 months.
- If a club learns of any concerns over the content of the linked site, it should investigate immediately. Unless it is clear that there is no need for concern, the link should be removed immediately, and any decision to restore only made after the concern has been investigated.

### ***Webcams and live image streams***

The use of webcams on websites is becoming increasingly common, with pictures and sound streamed live. It can be a very effective way to portray a club’s activities and atmosphere.

However control is difficult. Any live image stream, by its nature, cannot be checked before transmission. Also, depending on the siting of the camera, it may not be possible to limit the people whose image or speech is transmitted. Furthermore there is a risk that images or speech could help identify children, or contain personal information about those children, and the image stream could attract unwelcome interest from potential abusers. There is less risk when streaming a match or training session, compared to a social event. Schools are advised not to have live image streams on publicly available websites.

Risks are lessened if the streamed images are on a part of the website where access is restricted, such as a members section. However such restricted access prevents the images generating interest in the club among members of the public.

### **Recommendations:**

- A club needs to give careful thought to why it wants its website to stream images, what images it intends to capture, and how they will be presented.
- Any transmitted image stream should be pictures only, without sound.
- As far as possible, the images should be of groups of people, not individuals.
- A club should try to notify all visitors (both adults and children) whose image may be caught that a webcam is in operation. Usually this is through the use of prominent notices placed around all entrances to the area covered by the camera.

<h3><b>RESOURCES</b></h3> <p>Please find enclosed an up to date Resources Request form which can be used to order the various forms, leaflets, templates etc from the RFL.</p>
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### **SAFEGUARDING TRAINING**

We would like to remind all clubs of the importance of CWOs, coaches and other relevant volunteers receiving some Safeguarding training. The most effective way to do this is to arrange a Safeguarding & Protecting children course at your club. The maximum number of

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people allowed on this course is 20 and the RFL subsidise the cost so it is only £15 per person (usually £25). This is a SCUUK recognised course and counts towards a coach's CPD.

Please contact the Safeguarding team to arrange a course at your club. You could even join up with a neighbouring club or alternatively, if there are only a small amount of people at your club who want to attend a SPC course, then please get in touch and we will advise you of the next course in your area.

You can also source local courses in your area via the Sports Coach UK website – [www.sportscoachuk.org](http://www.sportscoachuk.org), click onto the Quick Locate Workshops and click onto your area. Then click on the workshops for a list of Safeguarding & Protecting Workshops in your area.

### **COMMUNITY GAME 100% ME ANTI-DOPING TRAINING**

Just a reminder that the RFL is now delivering anti-doping education sessions to Community clubs. These sessions are appropriate for players from U15 upwards, coaching staff and volunteers. To request a session, please contact the RFL using the below details. The RFL will then arrange to deliver a session to your club at a convenient time.

### **CRBs**

If you're not sure who has a current CRB in place at your club you can send a list of volunteers to Stacey Thompson who will check their CRB status against our database. Under RFL regulations CRB checks remain valid for three years so don't forget to apply for renewals.

### **CWO TICKETS FOR ENGLAND v WALES**

If you haven't already applied for your complimentary tickets for the England v Wales game (to be played at the Keepmoat Stadium, Doncaster on Friday 10 October) we can accept applications up to Monday 6 October 2008. If you would like to take up your tickets please use the enclosed form or email Stacey Thompson.

### **HEALTH & SAFETY BOOKLET**

The Health & Safety booklet is under review and it has been decided that the old version will not be circulated until the review is complete. Please accept our apologies if you have ordered a copy and are waiting for it to arrive, copies will be sent when available.

### **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	

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