

COACH CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES

As a coach you have probably wondered what you would do if you either suspected or were told that one of your players was a victim of child abuse. These guidelines are purely to increase awareness of the Child Protection issue.

If an allegation is brought to your attention:

DO

STAY CALM – do not rush into inappropriate action.

REASSURE THE CHILD – that they are not to blame and confirm that you know how difficult it must be to confide.

LISTEN – to what the child says and show that you have taken him/her seriously.

ALLOW ONLY ONE ADULT TO TALK TO THE CHILD – as any discrepancies in statements may lead to legal problems.

ENSURE THAT YOU CLEARLY UNDERSTAND WHAT THE CHILD HAS SAID – and record it – so that you can pass it on to the appropriate agencies.

CONSULT WITH YOUR IDENTIFIED CHILD PROTECTION TEAM – ensuring that you communicate all the information accurately.

FOLLOW GUIDELINES relating to confidentiality.

DO NOT

DO NOT QUESTION THE CHILD. The law is very strict and child abuse cases have been dismissed if it appears that the child has been led or words and ideas have been suggested.

DO NOT IGNORE WHAT HAS BEEN DISCLOSED.

DO NOT PANIC.

DO NOT CHALLENGE PARENT/ GUARDIAN about your concerns.

DO NOT MAKE PROMISES YOU CAN'T KEEP – explain that you may have to tell other people in order to stop what is happening whilst maintaining maximum possible confidentiality.

DO NOT MAKE THE CHILD REPEAT THE STORY UNNECESSARILY.

DO NOT DELAY the reporting procedure.

Should anyone have an issue to be discussed, in the first instance they should contact the Child Welfare Officer – Gail Gallagher (01327 860253), one of the Child Protections Officers or any member of the committee.

If asked for by the child, support from the Child Welfare Officer and any member of the committee will be entirely confidential and kept so; even during the investigative phase. Parents will be kept informed when concerns have been expressed.

SHOULD THE PERSON SUSPECTING ANY ABUSE BE WORRIED ... they have a duty to act immediately to prevent further harm occurring.

If the club's procedures cannot resolve things quickly, then social services can be contacted directly, or alternatively CHILDLINE can be contacted on:

0800 800 500

where immediate advice and help can be found.

(N.B the RFU considers the child protection policy to cover all children until the age of 18 years old.)

The guidelines overleaf originate from a detailed RFU/RFUW Child/Young Player Protection Policy.

Child Protection - Guidelines for Good Practice

1. Always be publicly open when working with children. Avoid situations where you and an individual child are completely unobserved.
2. Rugby is a physical game. Situations will occur when, in order to teach or coach certain techniques, it is necessary to make contact with the player. If this is the case, tell the player beforehand and ask them if they have any objections.
3. If groups are to be supervised in changing rooms, always ensure that adults work in pairs, and that gender is appropriate. Coaches should avoid changing/showering with the players.
4. Where mixed teams compete away from home they should always be accompanied by at least one male and one female adult.
5. Volunteers and professionals must respect the rights and dignity and worth of all and treat everyone with equality.
6. Coaches must place the well-being and safety of the player above the development of performance.
7. Coaches should:
 - Avoid overplaying players (particularly talented players). All players need and deserve equal opportunity to play.
 - Remember that children play for fun and enjoyment and that winning is only a part of it.
 - Ensure that contact skills are taught in a safe, secure manner paying due regard to the physical development of young players.
 - Never allow young players to train or play when injured.
 - Ensure equipment and facilities are safe and appropriate to the age and ability of the players.
8. Coaches should hold current RFU coaching awards or a recognised leadership award.
9. Coaches must ensure that the activities which they direct or advocate are appropriate to the age, maturity and ability of the players.
10. Coaches should always promote the positive aspects of their sport (eg fair play), and never condone law violations or use of prohibited substances.
11. Coaches must consistently display high standards of personal behaviour and appearance.
12. Coaches must never overtly criticise players or use language or actions which may cause the player to lose self esteem or confidence.
13. Coaches should report any suspicious adult behaviour to a committee member.

Everyone should also be aware that, as a general rule, it does not make sense for a coach to:

- Spend amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Take children alone on car journeys, however short, the journey.
- Take children to your home.

If it should arise that such situations are unavoidable, they should only take place with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the club/governing body and/or a person with parental consent for the player.

If you accidentally hurt a player, or cause distress in any manner, or the player appears to respond in a sexual manner to your actions, or misunderstands, or misinterprets something you have done, report the incident to a colleague supported by a brief written report of the incident as soon as possible. Parents/carers should also be informed of the occurrence.