

# **WRU- GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN**

## **Introduction**

To provide children with the best possible experience and opportunities in Rugby Union, everyone must operate within an accepted ethical framework. The WRU has implemented some clear policies and procedures to address Child Protection and Best Practice.

The WRU aims to give information and guidelines to all who work with children and young people in rugby. Many may consider that only rugby coaches need help and advice. However, it is important that club and county officials, tournament organisers, volunteers and any others who meet children through rugby have clear guidelines and information to help them and importantly, the children whom they come into contact with through rugby.

The role of the coach is one of great responsibility and all coaches are expected to behave the same as if they were a school teacher.

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse. It is therefore NOT the responsibility of employees or participants in Rugby Union to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place. It is however their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and act if they have concerns about the welfare of the child.

This section will help you identify what is meant by good practice and poor practice.

## **Good Practice**

All personnel should adhere to the following principles and action:

- always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets)
- make the experience of Rugby Union fun and enjoyable: promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying
- treat all children equally and with respect and dignity
- always put the welfare of the child first, before winning
- maintain a safe and appropriate distance with players (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them)
- avoid unnecessary physical contact with children. Where any form of manual/physical support is required it should be provided openly and with the consent of the child. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the child's consent has been given

- involve parents/carers wherever possible, e.g. where children need to be supervised in changing rooms, encourage parents to take responsibility for their own child. If groups have to be supervised in changing rooms always ensure parents, coaches etc work in pairs
- request written parental consent if club officials are required to transport children in their cars
- gain written parental consent for any significant travel arrangements e.g. overnight stays
- ensure that if mixed teams are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff
- ensure that at away events adults should not enter a child's room or invite a child to their rooms
- be an excellent role model, this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children
- always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- recognising the developmental needs and capacity of the child and do not risk sacrificing welfare in a desire for club or personal achievements. This means avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will
- secure written parental consent for the club to act in loco parentis, to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises. This includes emergency contact details for parent of guardian
- keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given

## **Poor Practice**

The following are regarded as poor practice and should be avoided by all personnel:

- unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others
- taking children alone in a car on journeys, however short
- taking children to your home where they will be alone with you
- sharing a room with a child
- engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- allowing children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- making sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun

- reducing a child to tears as a form of control
- allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- do things of a personal nature that the child can do for themselves

Where cases arise where it is impractical/impossible to avoid certain situations e.g. transporting a child in your car, the tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the parent/carer and the child involved.

If during your care you accidentally hurt a child, the child seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions and/or if the child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report any such incidents as soon as possible to another colleague and make a written note of it. Parents should also be informed of the incident.

## **Physical Contact in Rugby**

Many sports including rugby, by their nature, require a degree of physical contact between adults and children. Physical contact can be used appropriately to instruct, encourage, protect or comfort. The aims of guidelines relating to physical contact are to provide adults and children with appropriate types and contexts for touching.

Physical contact between adults and children should only be used when the aim is to:

- Develop sports skills or techniques
- Treat an injury
- Prevent an injury
- Meet the requirements of the particular sport

Physical contact should:

- Not involve touching genital areas, buttocks or breasts
- Meet the need of the child and not the need of the adult
- Be fully explained to the child and with the exception of an emergency, permission should be sought
- Not take place in secret or out of sight of others

Records of injuries should be fully recorded

## **DEFINING CHILD ABUSE**

There are five main types of abuse: **physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, bullying and neglect.** The abuser may be a family member, someone the child encounters in residential care or in the community, including sports and leisure activities. Any individual may abuse or neglect a child directly, or may be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another person harming the child.

Abuse in all of its forms can affect a child at any age. The effects can be so damaging that if not treated, may follow the individual into adulthood

Children with disabilities may be at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and a powerlessness to

protect themselves or adequately communicate that abuse has occurred.

**Physical Abuse:** where adults physically hurt or injure a child e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, drowning. Giving children alcohol or inappropriate drugs would also constitute child abuse

In a sports situation, physical abuse may occur when the nature and intensity of training disregard the capacity of the child's immature and growing body

**Emotional Abuse:** the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child, likely to cause severe and lasting adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve telling a child they are useless, worthless, unloved, inadequate or valued in terms of only meeting the needs of another person. It may feature expectations of children that are not appropriate to their age or development. It may cause a child to be frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the young person frightened or withdrawn. Ill treatment of children, whatever form it takes, will always feature a degree of emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse in sport may occur when the child is constantly criticised, given negative feedback, expected to perform at levels that are above their capability. Other forms of emotional abuse could take the form of name calling and bullying.

**Bullying** may come from another young person or an adult. Bullying is defined as deliberate hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. There are three main types of bullying.

It may be physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, slapping), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, name calling, graffiti, threats, abusive text messages), emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group), or sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments).

In sport bullying may arise when a parent or coach pushes the child too hard to succeed, or a rival athlete or official uses bullying behaviour.

**Neglect** occurs when an adult fails to meet the child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, to an extent that is likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development. For example, failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect from physical harm or danger, or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Refusal to give attention can also be a form of neglect.

Neglect in sport could occur when a coach does not keep the child safe, or exposing them to undue cold/heat or unnecessary risk of injury.

**Sexual Abuse** occurs when adults (male or female) use children to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse and fondling. Showing children pornography or talking to them in a sexually explicit manner are also forms of sexual abuse.

In sport, activities which might involve physical contact with children could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Also the power of the coach over young athletes, if misused, may lead to abusive situations developing.

## **Action required if you identify concerns or signs of abuse**

Recognising signs of abuse/bullying in a child can be very difficult unless there are some signs of physical or behavioural change. However, the possibility of abuse may be suspected from something which another person says. It is important to be aware and vigilant and to deal with the facts in an objective manner.

Sometimes the child may give an indication that they want to talk and it is then important to follow a number of principles. It is important that any disclosure is dealt with correctly so the WRU has created a very simple procedure.

- stay calm and assure the child
- for a child to disclose it takes great courage, however they are telling you because they want your help and for the abuse to stop. Don't make promises of confidentiality but explain that you will need to contact other professionals who will be able to give the help which is needed.
- you must listen to what the child says and not suggest ideas. Keep questions to a minimum and use open questions and record what has been said as soon as possible. It is very important to record the exact words as spoken by the child recording the facts and not opinions.
- you must report your concern to the WRU Child Protection Line on **029 2082 2455**
- It is very important that you do not tell anyone else about the complaint until you have discussed the situation with the WRU Child Protection Unit. This includes the alleged offender or other club official.

Social Services and Police have statutory duties under the Children Act. If you contact the Police/Social Services directly to report a concern then please ensure you also advise the WRU Child Protection Unit.

**The telephone number for the WRU Child Protection Line is 029 2082 2455**

**Child Protection is about putting in place the best possible practices and procedures, this will protect not only the child but also you, the adult. If you have any comments on this guideline or require any further support or guidance relating to children and young persons please contact the WRU Child Protection Line.**

### **WRU Child Protection Unit**

Westgate Plaza  
Millennium Stadium  
Westgate Street  
Cardiff  
CF10 1NS

**WRU Child Protection Line: 029 2082 2455**

Email: [childprotection@wru.co.uk](mailto:childprotection@wru.co.uk)