



## SAFEGUARDING & PROTECTING CHILDREN IN RUGBY LEAGUE Newsletter 14 - Supplement – July 2008



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

Unfortunately the RFL often receives allegations of child on child racism within the game. The RFL has a Zero Tolerance policy on racism at all levels of the game. Hopefully this supplement to the Safeguarding newsletter will help you to TACKLE IT! at your club and to support children in your team who may be subject to racism at matches or whilst training.

#### SIGN UP TO **TACKLE IT!**

The RFL has produced TACKLE IT! Policy posters which clubs can complete and put on their notice boards to show their commitment to the TACKLE IT! campaign. A poster is included in this newsletter.

#### **TACKLE IT!** - ZERO TACKLE COUNT – ZERO TOLERANCE

The RFL has a Zero Tolerance policy on racism in any form. Make your club a Zero Tolerance Zone – this means that any sort of racist language or behaviour will not be tolerated and the clubs will take steps to make sure this does not happen.

#### **TACKLE IT!** - FIRST TACKLE – POLICIES

Sign up to the Tackle It! policy – discuss it at a Committee Meeting, agree to support it, sign the policy poster and display it in your club house. Agree, sign and display your club’s Equal Opportunities poster available from the RFL.

#### **TACKLE IT!** - SECOND TACKLE – COMMUNICATION

There is no point in a policy that nobody knows about. Find a senior volunteer who is prepared to lead on TACKLE IT! Communicate with your supporters, volunteers, coaches, players and parents so they understand that racism will not be tolerated in your club. Make it a topic that is always covered at parents & players pre season meetings.

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## **TACKLEIT!** - THIRD TACKLE – PREVENTION

Make sure your Touch Line Managers are aware of your club's Zero Tolerance policy and that they enforce it at your matches. Report racism – no player should have to tolerate racist abuse. Make sure coaches are aware of your clubs Zero Tolerance policy and they enforce it whilst facilitating training sessions

## **TACKLEIT!** - FOURTH TACKLE – EDUCATION & PROCEDURES

Train your volunteers – Sports Coach UK has an excellent “Equity in your Coaching” Course. There is also a “Club for All” course for administrators, which shows how your club can benefit from reaching all member of the community, and explains how to reach out to them – young people, older people, those on low incomes, disabled people and people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Both of these courses are part of Club Mark. The RFL is developing in house education packages for clubs which can be delivered by rugby league specific tutors. Training is vital if clubs are to have a genuine understanding of the issues, barriers and possible solutions facing BME communities.

## **TACKLEIT!** - FIFTH TACKLE – PARTNERSHIP & DIVERSITY

Be proactive and develop partnerships with Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, they will help you identify barriers and work with you to encourage children and young people from all backgrounds to come to your club and make sure that they are welcomed..

## **TACKLEIT!** - SIXTH TACKLE – THE OUTCOME

**The Club is committed to ensuring Rugby League is a truly inclusive, uncompromising, family game.**

### **AWARENESS OF INCREASED VULNERABILITY TO ABUSE**

All those involved in rugby league need to be aware that some children and young people can be more vulnerable to abuse because of their needs and background.

#### **Children and young people - Minority ethnic groups**

(Please note that minority ethnic groups are not all black, also consider Eastern European, Irish and traveller communities)

Children and young people from minority ethnic groups may be more vulnerable to abuse because they may:

- 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.

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## **Children and young people - religion and faith**

(Please note that there are many different religions and faiths and often there are significant differences within the different religious groups)

Children and young people from various religions and faiths may be more vulnerable to abuse because they may:

- Experience religious intolerance, fear or hatred based on their religious beliefs
- Be subjected to myths based on stereotypes
- Suffer bullying or assumptions about their commitment to the game due to their religious beliefs and practices
- Be discriminated against, harassed or bullied based on their actual or perceived religious beliefs due to fear of religious extremism.

## **REPORT RACISM**

Following an agreement with BARLA in 2007 the RFL takes responsibility for dealing with all issues of racism unless a player has been dismissed by a referee who heard the abuse. In this context the agreement includes all other forms of unacceptable behaviour such as homophobic abuse etc. Any incidents of racism must be reported and will be acted upon.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THE PURPOSE OF AN INVESTIGATION IS TO FIND OUT THE TRUTH – IT IS OF EQUAL IMPORTANCE TO PROVE INNOCENCE AS TO PROVE GUILT.

The RFL's policy on investigation and prosecution of cases of racism is focussed towards an outcome that will change future behaviour. When junior and youth players are accused of racism the RFL treats case differently dependent on the age of the alleged perpetrator:

### **Under 11s**

These children are in the main below the age of criminal responsibility and are too young to be subjected to formal RFL disciplinary processes. The RFL investigation team will not speak to the players concerned direct. However the RFL Compliance Manager and/or investigators will write to the club concerned and expect the club to deal with the matter internally and report back to the RFL on the matter. Clubs are advised to speak to the player(s) concerned with their parents and to advise them that racism is unacceptable in the game and that Zero Tolerance applies. There does not need to be a punishment but there must be a commitment and understanding from the child and parent that racism is unacceptable. A letter of apology to the victim and/or the victim's club may be a good idea in some cases. It may also be opportune for the club to organise training education on race awareness and challenging racism. Again links with BME community groups may also provide an important source of information and resources for a club committed to challenging racism.

### **Under 14s**

In one off cases the RFL may chose to allow a club to investigate as above however in serious or persistent cases the RFL will investigate thoroughly which may involve investigators speaking to the perpetrators and victims and may in some cases lead to an RFL disciplinary hearing. The interview would be managed in a very sympathetic manner by a trained RFL investigator. Children of any age are entitled to have an appropriate adult

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### **Under 18s**

At this age group the standard disciplinary processes will apply with the caveat that players must be accompanied by an appropriate adult for interviews and hearings. It may also be opportune for the club to organise training or education as above..

### **USE ROLE MODELS**

Remind the young players in your club about the huge impact players from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups have had and continue to have on the game. You may be able to undertake a project in partnership with local BME organisations and schools on BME participation in Rugby League around Black history month in October. The RFL may also be able to assist with ideas and resources – see the contact details for Sarah Williams below.

### **Clive Sullivan MBE**

In World Cup year remind your players that Clive Sullivan captained Great Britain to World Cup success in 1972. Clive was the first black player to captain any British or English representative team in any major sport.

### **Ellery Hanley MBE**

Ellery Hanley MBE captained Great Britain 18 times and is one of only three players to have captained two Lions teams to Australia. He played in the 1992 World Cup Final when Great Britain lost narrowly to Australia at Wembley. Ellery also coached Great Britain.

### **Ikram Butt**

Ikram was the first British Asian to play rugby league for England or indeed to represent England for any major sport when he played against Wales in 1995. Since Ikram retired from playing he has set up the British Asian Rugby Association which campaigns to provide positive role models, promote community integration and break down cultural barriers through rugby.

### **CONTACT THE RFL EQUALITY & DIVERSITY MANAGER FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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