



## RFL Anti-Bullying Policy

### Statement of Intent

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all participants so they can participate in Rugby League in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable. If bullying does occur, all players, parents/guardians, volunteers and coaches should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We urge all of our clubs to be TELLING clubs. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the Club Welfare Officer or any committee member.

### What is bullying?

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

Bullying can be: -

- **Emotional** being unfriendly, excluding individuals deliberately, tormenting, e.g. hiding kit, threatening gestures)
- **Physical** pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- **Racist** racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- **Sexual** unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- **Homophobic** because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality
- **Verbal** name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- **Cyber** All areas of internet, such as Facebook, Twitter, email, internet chat rooms, message boards, instant messenger services. Also includes misuse of cameras, video cameras or mobile phones, e.g. text messages.

### Why is it important to Report bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Individuals who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

All Rugby League Clubs have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

All individuals involved in Rugby League have a responsibility to report any issues of bullying to the Club Welfare Officer or another appropriate person.

### Objectives of this policy

- All players, coaches, officials, volunteers and parents/guardians should:
  - Have an understanding of what bullying is.
  - Know what their club policy is, how to report any issues and how to deal with any issues that have been reported.
  - Have an appreciation of the signs and indicators of bullying.
- To ensure clubs take bullying seriously and have the appropriate policies and procedures in place.
- To assure players and parents/guardians that they will be supported if bullying is reported.
- To make it clear that bullying will not be tolerated in Rugby League.

### **What are the indicators of Bullying?**

A child may indicate that he or she is being bullied by certain signs or by displaying certain behaviours. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and should investigate if a child:

- Says he/she is being bullied.
- Is unwilling to go to training sessions or matches, especially if they used to enjoy these activities.
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence.
- Feels ill before training sessions or matches.
- Comes home with clothes torn or equipment damaged.
- Has possessions go 'missing'.
- Asks for money or starts to steal money (to pay the bully).
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Is frightened to say what's wrong
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above

Or in more extreme cases, if a child:

- Starts stammering
- Cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or otherwise unreasonable
- Stops eating
- Self Harming
- Attempts or threatens suicide or running away

The above signs may indicate other problems, however, bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

### **What to do if you suspect bullying is taking place?**

1. Report bullying incidents to the Club Welfare Officer or another member of the committee. If no-one from the Club is available contact the RFL's Safeguarding Team.
2. In cases of serious bullying the matter should be referred to the RFL Safeguarding Team immediately.
3. Parents/guardians should be informed and be asked for a meeting to discuss the issues.
4. If necessary and appropriate, the Police should be consulted.
5. Any allegations of bullying should be investigated thoroughly and speedily and the acts of bullying stopped quickly.
6. An attempt should be made to help the bully (or bullies) change their behaviour.

7. If mediation fails and the bullying continues, the club should initiate disciplinary action.

### **Recommended Club Action**

If the Club decides it is appropriate for them to deal with the situation they should follow the procedure outlined below.

- Consider reconciliation – it may be that a genuine apology can solve the problem.
- If this fails or is not appropriate, a small panel (including the Club Welfare Officer) should meet with the parents/guardians of the child alleging bullying to get details of the allegation. Minutes should be taken which should be agreed by all parties.
- The same panel should meet with the alleged bully and his/her parents/guardians so they can give their views on the allegations. Once again minutes should be taken and agreed.
- If the panel believe that bullying has taken place, the individual should be warned and put on notice that any further incidents may lead to a temporary or permanent suspension from the club. Consideration should be given as to whether a reconciliation meeting between the parties is appropriate.
- It may be appropriate for the parents/guardians of the bully or the bullies player to be asked to attend training sessions.
- The Club Welfare Officer and other members of the committee should monitor the situation to ensure bullying does not reoccur.
- All coaches involved with the individuals concerned should be made aware of the situation and what to do if bullying is observed.

In the case of serious bullying or an adult bullying a child the RFL Safeguarding Team should be informed. Cases of this nature will be dealt with under the Safeguarding Case Management procedure or may be referred to Police and/or Children's Social Care if appropriate.

### **Can bullying be prevented?**

- The Club will have a written constitution/code of conduct, which includes acceptable standards of behaviour for all players, parents/guardians, volunteers and coaches.
- All players, parents/guardians, volunteers and coaches will receive a copy of the constitution/code of conduct upon joining the club or at the start of each season if appropriate.
- The Club Welfare Officer will raise awareness of bullying and why having a robust anti-bullying policy matters, and if issues of bullying arise in the club, consideration will be given to meeting with all players, parents/guardians, volunteers and coaches to discuss the issues openly and constructively – although with no specific reference to individual incidents.
- The Club will display a copy of the RFL's Anti-Bullying Poster and Policy in an appropriate place – more copies are available on request or can be downloaded from the RFL website.
- All Coaches and other volunteers will be mindful of behaviour that could escalate and constitute bullying

### **What is Cyberbullying?**

Cyberbullying is the use of communications technology to deliberately upset someone. This is an extension of face-to-face bullying and should be treated just as seriously. Cyberbullying can take place via mobile phones, emails, internet chat rooms, message boards or instant messaging services.

- Threats and intimidation
- Harassment and stalking
- Defamation
- Rejection and exclusion
- Identify theft, hacking into social media accounts and impersonation
- Publically posting or sending on personal information about another person
- Manipulation

### **Why is cyberbullying different?**

One of the biggest differences between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying is that it can be hard to get away from. Young people could be bullied anywhere, anytime – even when they're at home.

- It can reach a vast audience in a matter of seconds
- It has the potential to draw in large numbers of people
- It takes 'repetition' to a different level, with hurtful comments and images being shared multiple times
- It has the potential to impact at any time of day or night
- It can offer a degree of anonymity to the perpetrator
- There are very few children that have not been impacted in some way, either as the perpetrator or the victim
- It's difficult to police and to punish
- There is often some form of evidence (e.g. screen shot, text message).

### **How can it be prevented?**

- Children's use of technology should be monitored to prevent inappropriate usage.
- Children should be made aware of the repercussions their actions may have – what may be seen as joke at one end may not be received as one because the sender cannot see the impact of their message.
- 'Blocking' the bully or removing from 'buddy' lists so that the bully cannot send messages to the individual concerned.
- Advising the individual being bullied not to reply or retaliate.
- Advising children to set their profiles on social networks to 'Private' so only their approved friends have access.

### **What is racist bullying?**

Racist bullying is motivated by a prejudice against a particular race, nationality or religion. Racist bullying can be physical, emotional, verbal, physical or sexual.

Do not assume that Caucasian children cannot be the victims of racist bullying.

### **How can it be prevented?**

It should be made clear that racist bullying, like all forms of bullying, will not be tolerated.

The Club should make it clear that racist language will not be tolerated at any time in order to create an atmosphere where all players, parents/guardians, volunteers and coaches know that it is inappropriate and feel comfortable to report incidents.

All players should be educated regarding different nationalities, races, cultures and religions. Most prejudices are the result of ignorance.

### **What is homophobic bullying?**

Homophobic bullying occurs when bullying is motivated by a prejudice against lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) people, or where the individual being bullied has LGB parents/guardians or is referred to as LGB, even if he/she is not. Homophobic bullying can be physical, emotional, verbal, physical or sexual.

### **How can it be prevented?**

It should be made clear that homophobic bullying, like all forms of bullying, will not be tolerated.

The Club should make it clear that homophobic language will not be tolerated at any time in order to create an atmosphere where all players, parents/guardians, volunteers and coaches know that it is inappropriate and feel comfortable to report incidents.

### **Who can I Contact for further information?**

RFL Safeguarding Team  
0844 477 7113 Option 4  
[safeguarding@rfl.uk.com](mailto:safeguarding@rfl.uk.com)

KIDSCAPE – a voluntary organisation committed to help prevent bullying  
0207 730 63300  
[www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

Anti-Bullying Alliance – an organisation aiming to reduce bullying and create safer environments in which children and young people can live, grow, play and learn.  
[www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)

The NSPCC  
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/bullying-and-cyberbullying/>