



WRL SAFEGUARDING ADULTS AT RISK POLICY

1 Policy Statement – Safeguarding ‘Adults at Risk’

An Adult at Risk is a person aged 18 or over who is in need of care and support (regardless of whether they are receiving that care or support) and because of those needs is unable to protect themselves against abuse or neglect.

Wales Rugby League (WRL) is the National Governing Body for Rugby League in Wales. This Policy relates to all people or organisations who participate in Rugby League under the auspices of the WRL. The WRL believes it is important to raise awareness of individuals in Rugby League who may be at risk. The WRL will not tolerate abuse of such individuals and is committed to providing a welcoming environment, activity and interest to all members of the community who wish to take part.

The WRL's Equality and Diversity Strategy expresses the game's commitment to inclusion and to the celebration of diversity in our game. Rugby League can play an important part in the lives of adults, including adults who are considered 'at risk'.

This Policy:

- seeks to ensure that all can recognise an adult who may be at risk and know how to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for all such individuals.
- provide a framework for taking action when abuse against an Adult at Risk may be taking place.

The WRL will encourage and support all involved in the game, including clubs, match officials' societies, workers and volunteers and club Foundations, to adopt and demonstrate their commitment to this Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy.

2 Definitions & Assumptions

To assist working through and understanding this Policy a number of key definitions need to be explained:

2.1 Adult at Risk

For the purposes of this Policy an "adult at risk" is one who:

- Has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority or other organisation is meeting any of those needs) and;
- Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect; and;
- As a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect.

For the avoidance of doubt, this is a very different test to whether an individual has a disability. If you want further advice on whether someone is an "adult at risk" please contact the WRL Safeguarding Manager

Whether someone is 'adult at risk' may evolve over time such that someone who is not considered an 'adult at risk' at one particular time, may be so at another point.



- 2.2 Abuse** is a violation of an individual's rights by another person or persons. See section 7 above for further explanations.
- 2.3 Adult** is anyone aged 18 or over.
- 2.4 Adult safeguarding** is protecting a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.
- 2.5 Capacity** refers to the ability to make a decision at a particular time, for example when under considerable stress. The starting assumption must always be that a person has the capacity to make a decision unless it can be established that they lack capacity (MCA 2005).
- 2.6 Are people with disabilities 'at risk'?**
No, the fact that an individual has a disability does not mean they are an 'adult at risk'. However, some adults with disabilities will have additional vulnerabilities which means that they are also an 'adult at risk'.

3 WRL Commitment

The WRL is committed to:

- welcoming people into the sport and providing a positive experience that is genuinely inclusive;
- making reasonable adaptations and adjustments in a flexible manner to allow people of different ability, disability and/or impairment to have positive experiences of Rugby League;
- taking action to protect adults involved in Rugby League that may be at risk;
- seeking ways to improve the safety and well-being of all 'adults at risk' who take part in Rugby League;
- emphasising that everyone in Rugby League has a responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of all 'adults at risk' who take part;
- recognising that ability and disability can change over time, such that some adults may be additionally vulnerable to abuse, for example those who have a dependency on others or have different communication needs;
- recognising that a disabled adult may or may not be identified as an 'adult at risk';
- improving outcomes for 'adults at risk' by adhering to current legislation that supports the safeguarding of adults; and
- providing support and advice to everyone involved in Rugby League at all levels.

As part of this commitment the WRL will:

- Manage its services in a way which minimises the risk of abuse occurring;
- Support 'adults at risk' who are experiencing or have experienced abuse within the Game;
- Work with 'adults at risk' and other agencies to tackle any abuse that may occur within the Game;
- Seek ways to improve the safety and well-being of all 'adults at risk' who take part in Rugby League.

In achieving these aims the organisation will:

- Ensure that relevant staff and volunteers have access to and are familiar with this Safeguarding Adults at Risk policy and procedures and their responsibilities within it;
- Ensure concerns or allegations of abuse are always taken seriously;
- Ensure that referrals are made to the appropriate authorities in a timely manner;



- Ensure appropriate guidance and training in relation to safeguarding adults is made available to staff and volunteers;
- Ensure that participants in Rugby League, their relatives and/or informal carers have access to information about how to report concerns or allegations of abuse;
- Ensure that the WRL Safeguarding Team provide support and advice;
- Ensure there is a named lead person to promote safeguarding awareness and practice within the organisation.

The WRL Safeguarding Manager: contact stephen.jones@walesrugbyleague.co.uk

4 General Principles

This Policy is based on the Definitions and Legal Framework set out in sections 8 and 9 below and the guidance and procedures are based on the following six principles of Adult Safeguarding:

- 4.1 Empowerment** - People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent.
- 4.2 Prevention** – It is better to take action before harm occurs.
- 4.3 Proportionality** – The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
- 4.4 Protection** – Support and representation for those in greatest need.
- 4.5 Partnership** – Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.
- 4.6 Accountability** – Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

5 Overview

The Safeguarding Adults at Risk policy has been developed to ensure that procedures are in place to protect adults, including those at risk, to seek to ensure that they are safe from harm and have an enjoyable Rugby League experience. It confirms that abuse will not be tolerated in Rugby League, and where possible abuse involves an 'adult at risk', this policy and procedures provide the framework for action.

6 Responsibility

This policy states that it is everyone's responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants so that they can enjoy Rugby League.

In addition, each club or organisation should decide based on its own circumstances and involvement in different programs whether it should have a dedicated Adult Welfare Officer or whether the current Club Welfare Officer has the time and knowledge to cover the dual role. In either case the relevant Officer should be clearly identified in club literature and should receive relevant training.

For the WRL the Safeguarding Manager covers both Adults at Risk and Safeguarding children and young people and can be contacted in the case of any concerns or for advice at stephen.jones@walesrugbyleague.co.uk or by telephone 07955 365165



7 Best Safeguarding Adults at Risk Practice

Everyone in Rugby League has the responsibility to be open and welcoming, and to reach out to all in the communities where our clubs are based.

Good practice in welcoming people includes making sure the club, team or squad explicitly states that new people are welcome, and that everyone is welcome.

There are already some examples of great practice where Rugby League has welcomed and embraced different communities – the rise in women, girls and disability Rugby League is testimony to this. We want to ensure that this welcome is extended to all communities, whatever their background.

7.1 Policies and Procedures

7.1.1 Safer Recruitment

Legally, anyone undertaking a role that involves contact with, or responsibility for, children or other vulnerable groups should be taken through a safer recruitment process. Adults at risk would be classed under the term 'vulnerable group'. Some individuals may not be suitable to work with adults at risk due to gaps in their understanding, skills or knowledge or due to previous concerns about conduct.

Rugby League clubs and organisations are only as good as the people who work and volunteer there. They should create a setting that makes everyone feel welcomed and safe. This can only be undertaken by ensuring that people are recruited as safely as possible. It is therefore essential that all clubs and organisations have effective recruitment and selection procedures for both paid staff and volunteers. These will help to screen out and discourage those who are not suitable from joining your club/organisation.

7.1.2 DBS Applications

Anyone who is working with Adults at Risk should have a DBS through the RFL which includes checking against the Barred from working with Adults list. It is important to distinguish between roles involving working with Adults at Risk and Children roles as the risk assessment criteria is different and includes for instance assessing for risk of fraudulent activity. Failure to do so is a breach of this Policy.

7.1.3 Other Checks

The DBS disclosure and checking against the barred list, if appropriate to the role, is only one part of a safe recruitment process. In all cases regarding the vetting of paid and voluntary staff working in sport, standard best practice dictates that:

- a thorough checking of a person's qualifications and training attended;
- detailed application forms;
- robust interviews that include the opportunity for self-disclose and check safeguarding, equality and diversity knowledge and skills;
- checking references;
- thorough induction processes;
- verification of qualifications and experience; and
- risk assessment of concerning information,

all form the basis of safe recruitment and best practice when recruiting individuals to work with adults at risk.



Then when people are in post there should be a probationary period and review and regular safeguarding training that includes safeguarding adults at risk.

7.2 Good practice

Everyone should:

- Aim to make the experience of participating in Rugby League fun and enjoyable.
- Promote fairness and playing by the rules.
- Not tolerate the use of prohibited or illegal substances.
- Treat all adults equally and preserve their dignity; this includes giving more and less talented members of a group similar attention, time and respect.

The WRL expects that that coaches of adult players in environments in which there are or are likely to be Adults at Risk to:

- Adopt and endorse the WRL Coach Codes of Conduct;
- Abide by the RESPECT policy;
- Respect the developmental stage of each player and not risk sacrificing their welfare in a desire for team or personal achievement.
- Ensure that the training intensity is appropriate to the physical, social and emotional stage of the development of the player.
- Work with adults at risk, medical advisers and their carers (where appropriate) to develop realistic training and competition schedules which are suited to the needs and lifestyle of the player, not the ambitions of others such as coaches, team members, parents or carers.
- Build relationships based on mutual trust and respect, encouraging adults at risk to take responsibility for their own development and decision-making.
- Always be publicly open when working with adults at risk.
- Avoid coaching sessions or meetings where a coach and an individual player are completely unobserved.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with people. Physical contact (touching) can be appropriate so long as:
 - It is neither intrusive nor disturbing.
 - The player's permission has been openly given.
 - It is delivered in an open environment.
 - It is needed to demonstrate during a coaching session.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate relationship with players and avoid forming intimate relationships with players as this may threaten the position of trust and respect present between player and coach.
- Be an excellent role model by maintaining appropriate standards of behaviour.
- Gain the adult at risk's consent and, where appropriate, the consent of relevant carers, in writing, to administer emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises.
- Be aware of medical conditions, disabilities, existing injuries and medicines being taken and keep written records of any injury or accident that occurs, together with details of treatments provided.
- Gain written consent from the correct people and fill out relevant checklists and information forms for travel arrangements and trips. This must be the adult themselves if they have capacity to do so.

Some Adults at Risk will be able to participate in Rugby League, in the way that they wish, with the minimum of support and adaptations required. Others will require a different approach that takes particular account of their needs and makes specific provision for these. A simple example of good practice is where a player with a learning disability has a playing 'buddy', a person who they can turn to for support, or if they have



any questions about the session or game.

8 Recognising Abuse and Poor Practice

8.1 Poor practice

The following are regarded as poor practice and must be avoided:

- Unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with an individual adult.
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Allowing or engaging in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Using language that might be regarded as inappropriate by the adult and which may be hurtful or disrespectful.
- Making sexually suggestive comments, even in jest.
- Reducing an adult to tears as a form of control.
- Letting allegations made by an adult go un-investigated, unrecorded, or not acted upon.
- Taking an adult at risk alone in a car on journeys, however short.
- Inviting or taking an adult at risk to your home or office where they will be alone with you.
- Sharing a room with an adult at risk.
- Doing things of a personal nature that adults at risk can do for themselves.

In some cases poor practice particularly when deliberate or persistent will be considered to be Abuse.

Note: *At times it may be acceptable to do some of the above, which can be justified in exceptional circumstances, such as taking an adult at risk alone in a car journey. In these cases, to protect both the adult at risk and yourself, seek written consent from the adult at risk and, where appropriate, their carers and ensure that the Lead Adult/Club Welfare Officer of your organisation is aware of the situation and gives their approval.*

If, during your care, an adult at risk suffers any injury, seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions, or misunderstands/misinterprets something you have done, report these incidents as soon as possible to another adult in the organisation and make a brief written note of it. Do not repeat the action that caused this reaction.

8.2 Abuse

In Rugby League, the following **examples may** cause concern that an adult would be 'at risk':

- A member of a learning disability squad being financially exploited by another member of the squad.
- A young woman confiding in her coach about a forthcoming holiday where she fears she will be married against her will.
- A coach who regularly neglects the individual needs of disabled participants when training.
- A player being 'groomed' for sexual abuse by his or her coach.
- A player who frequently has unexplained bruises and injuries, and who will not change with their team-mates.



8.3 Reporting

Occasionally an individual may need protecting.

If an 'adult at risk' may require the protection of either the Police or Social Care Safeguarding Services, either because of something happening inside or outside of Rugby League, in an emergency this should be reported to the appropriate Service immediately and the WRL Safeguarding Team should be informed.

An example of good practice in passing concerns to the WRL Safeguarding Team would be where an 'adult at risk' has informed somebody that they are receiving text messages from another player that are sexually explicit and unwelcome.

If it is unclear whether or not the individual would meet the definition of 'at risk', the information should be shared with the WRL Safeguarding Team, who will help make the decision.

Where an adult does not meet the definition of 'at risk', either because they do not have a health or social care need, or it does not prevent them protecting themselves, then the matter can be dealt with as a complaint, but with appropriate levels of support provided depending on the adult's particular needs. The WRL Safeguarding Team can advise on what sort of support may be appropriate.

Where a potential offence has been committed (as in the texting example above), the complainant should always be advised of their right to contact the police in the first instance, and advice sought from the WRL Safeguarding Team.

In any case and in all situations, if it is thought that a crime may be currently being committed, or in an Emergency situation, dial 999 and inform the police.

Any individual becoming aware that an adult may be suffering abuse, whether or not they meet the definition of 'adult at risk' has a responsibility to raise their concern with somebody: a relevant officer at the club / team / squad,., with the Police or with local Social Services.

8.4 Recognising the Different Types of Abuse of Adults at Risk

The majority of adults, including 'adults at risk' live a life free from harm and abuse; however, some do suffer abuse. This is usually carried out by a family member, close family friend or person in a position of trust. Everyone involved in Rugby League is encouraged to be vigilant to such abuse. Any or all of the different types of abuse may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance.

It can be difficult to distinguish poor practice from abuse, whether intentional or accidental.

It is not the responsibility of any individual involved in a Club to make judgements regarding whether or not abuse is taking place, however, all involved in Rugby League personnel have the responsibility to recognise and identify poor practice and potential abuse within a Rugby League setting, and act on this if they have concerns.



Physical abuse	This may include hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, pushing, kicking, biting, or otherwise causing physical harm to an individual. Physical harm may also be caused by the misuse of medication, inappropriate restraint, or inappropriate sanctions; Rugby League: examples would be incidents of violence such as the shoving and jostling of opponents, or where the nature and intensity of training or matches does not take account of an individual's needs, circumstances or health, to the point where they experience harm or distress.
Emotional abuse	This may include bullying, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks; Rugby League: emotional abuse may occur if people are subjected to undue or repeated criticism, name-calling, bullying, humiliation, threats, blame, sarcasm, or any discriminatory abuse, or because of unrealistic pressure to perform to expectations that are beyond their potential.
Sexual abuse	This may involve forcing or enticing an individual to take part in sexual activities (directly or indirectly) to which the individual has not consented or could not consent or was pressured into consenting. This can include compelling 'adults at risk' to listen to or take part in talk of a sexual nature. Sexual abuse can occur through social media activity. Rugby League: examples would range from the sharing of inappropriate jokes to the discomfort of individuals, through to activities of a criminal nature.
Financial abuse	includes theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits. Rugby League: an example in Rugby League would be an individual with a learning disability who is always expected to buy drinks for his 'mates', (see Mate Crime below) or exploited by being expected to host after match get together at his/her house at his/her expense.
'Mate Crime'	'Mate Crime' is the phenomenon of people with disabilities being groomed by those who pretend to be their friends before being exploited by them financially, physically or sexually. Rugby League: an 'adult at risk' might be exploited by his or her peer group by being asked always to pay for after match drinks or always asked to do things on behalf of the group – which others are not e.g. pack the kit bags of other players after a game



Social media, electronic communication and online abuse	Abuse can occur through social media; this may be difficult to detect. It is important to remember that the type of abuse that can occur through social media always includes emotional and psychological abuse and can include sexual and financial abuse. Some examples of abuse that can occur through social media include: – Unwanted sexual text messages (sexual abuse); – Unwanted communication (emotional abuse); – Inappropriate messaging; (emotional and sexual abuse); – Requests for money (financial abuse); – Harassment (emotional abuse); – Intimidation (emotional abuse); – Sexual coercion (sexual abuse); – Stalking (emotional abuse); – Cyber-bullying (emotional abuse)
Neglect and acts of omission	includes ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of necessities such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating. Rugby League: neglect may be either intentional or unintentional. It could include situations such as officials not giving players appropriate breaks on hot days or coaches not taking a player's injury seriously and asking them to continue playing.
Discriminatory abuse	includes abuse or ill-treatment based on a person's 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. Rugby League: In Rugby League this type of abuse is often difficult to detect and it may not always be clear as to who is the perpetrator. Discrimination can be based on age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender reassignment, HIV status, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, religion or sexual orientation, all of which are 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. 'Adults at risk' may also be seen to discriminate against each other, for example, using their disability as a joke with other disabled players. It is important to remember that the emotional impact of this type of joking or 'banter' on the other player is not always evident and may constitute emotional abuse. It also sets a level of expectation amongst others who may hear or see this behaviour, as being an acceptable way to address someone with a disability. This is not acceptable in Rugby League and needs to be addressed straight away. In all of the above circumstances the WRL Compliance Manager may issue or direct anyone else to issue a formal charge for a breach of the WRL Operational Rules



Institutional abuse	This mainly refers to neglect and poor professional practice. This may take the form of isolated incidents of poor or unsatisfactory professional practice, through to pervasive ill treatment or gross misconduct. Repeated instances of poor care may be an indication of more serious problems. Rugby League: Institutional abuse could occur due to poor management or practice causing harm. Within Rugby League an example might be where management put the success of a team before, and without due care and attention for, the health and well-being of individual players.
Other issues outside Rugby League	Other issues outside Rugby League may be relevant. These may include: – Self-neglect or self-harm – Hate crime – Harassment and Intimidation – Domestic abuse (including ...forced marriage and honour-based crime) – Human trafficking – Abuse by another 'adult at risk' – Abuse by children – Exploitation by people who promote violence



8.5 Frequently Asked Questions

8.5.1 Why don't 'adults at risk' always report abuse?

Often adults feel disempowered and unable to speak about abuse that may be occurring to them. This is often due to fear about what people will say or being upset at not being able to resolve the situation for themselves.

8.5.2 What are my responsibilities? When should I report a risk?

You are not required to make assessments of whether someone is at immediate risk of harm or is likely to suffer harm. This is something for statutory agencies such as Police and Social Care to assess.

Your responsibility is to report any concerns you may have and to report anything you may have witnessed. In an emergency you should report to statutory agencies immediately alternatively you can ask the WRL Safeguarding Manager to report on your behalf where this will not cause unacceptable delay.

If you fail to respond and report a concern, an 'adult at risk' may continue to suffer harm.

8.5.3 What should I do if I am worried about an adult in Rugby League who may be an 'adult at risk'?

You should share your concerns with someone suitable. If your club, team or squad has a designated Adult Welfare Officer, share your worries with them and agree a course of action. If there is nobody at the club you feel comfortable sharing your worries with, please contact the Safeguarding manager at the

WRL: stephen.jones@walesrugbyleague.co.uk

RFL: safeguarding@rfl.uk.com

Somebody needs to talk to the person concerned, to let them know you are worried and ask them if they would like to talk to you or to someone else. (They have the right to say 'no')

8.5.4 What should I do if I am worried about the safety of an adult who may be an 'adult at risk'?

Someone needs to speak with the adult you are worried about and let them know that you are worried and want to get some support for them. If you need advice about how to do this, contact the WRL Safeguarding Manager.

If you think anyone may be in danger, or that a crime may have been committed, do not hesitate to tell the police. If your team, club or squad has an identified Adult Welfare Officer, share your concerns with them or the Club Welfare Officer where appropriate. If they do not, please contact the WRL's lead officer for Safeguarding: email safeguarding email address for an initial discussion

When reporting any information, it is important to do so with sensitivity for the people involved and the person who may have raised the concern.



8.5.5 What should I do if they don't want me to tell anyone else or I don't have consent to report a problem?

Please consider the following:

- Is the adult placing themselves at further risk of harm?
- Is someone else likely to get hurt?
- Has a criminal offence occurred? This includes: theft or burglary of items, physical abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse or harassment.
- Is there suspicion that a crime has occurred?

If the answer to any of the questions above is 'yes' - then you can share without consent and need to share the information with the WRL Safeguarding Team and Police or Social Care. If in doubt you should always share the information with the WRL Safeguarding Team who will make the decision about whether it is appropriate to share the information with statutory services.

If you do not think they are at immediate risk of harm, you need to respect their right, as an adult, not to seek or accept help, unless you think they may not have the mental capacity to make this decision (see below).

Please remember: If somebody is in a position where they may be at risk of immediate harm, always contact the Police or Social Care.

8.5.6 What should I do if I have a concern about the well-being of an adult who may be an 'adult at risk'?

Somebody needs to talk to them. Difficulties can often be easily resolved at this level. If you do not feel confident to do this, please contact the Adult Welfare Officer, if one is appointed, or the WRL Safeguarding Team who will be able to offer advice.

8.5.7 What if I do not think they are able to make sensible decisions about receiving help?

If you think the adult may not have the mental capacity to make appropriate decisions about their situation you should seek the advice of local Social Care services or discuss the matter with the WRL Safeguarding Team, or where appointed, the Adult Welfare Officer.

8.5.8 What about adults who are not deemed 'at risk'?

Where an adult does not meet the definition of 'at risk', either because they do not have a health or social care need, or it does not prevent them protecting themselves, then the matter should be dealt with as a complaint, but with appropriate levels of support provided depending on the adult's particular needs. The WRL Safeguarding Team can advise on what sort of support may be appropriate.

8.5.9 Are all disabled people 'adults at risk'?

No. Many disabled people live independently and do not need the help of others, nor do they need Community Care services. Just because an adult has a disability does not necessarily mean they are 'at risk.'



8.5.10 What should I write down?

Make a written record of relevant information as it happens. This should include the date, venue, your concerns, the date and times of any conversations, who was involved, and what was said. Record actions taken.

8.6 Self-reporting of concerns

If you are an Adult at Risk involved in Rugby League and you feel that you may have been abused, may still be being abused, or are otherwise unhappy about your treatment, it is important that you try to speak to someone. If the club, team or squad has an Adult Welfare Officer, please talk to them.

If not, please talk to someone you trust, or the local Social Care Department, or the Police.

Make a written record of relevant information as it happens. This should include the date, venue, your concerns, the date and times of any conversations, who was involved, and what was said. Record actions taken. You may contact the WRL Safeguarding Team by emailing WRstephen.jones@walesrugbyleague.co.uk

8.7 WRL Case Management System

The WRL Safeguarding Case Management Group deals with cases involving Adults at Risk

9 Guidance and Legislation

The practices and procedures within this policy are based on the principles contained within the UK and legislation and Government Guidance and have been developed to complement the Safeguarding Adults Boards policy and procedures, and take the following into consideration:

- Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 and the Wales Safeguarding Procedures
- The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims (Amendment) Act 2012
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 1994 and 1998
- The General Data Protection Regulations 2018

More information is available from either Wales Rugby League Safeguarding or the [Ann Craft Trust \(ACT\)](#)