

RFL GUIDANCE ON TRANSPORTING CHILDREN

The RFL appreciate that clubs could not operate without the goodwill of volunteers and parents ensuring that children are returned home or transported to matches or training in a private car.

The vast majority of coaches and volunteers will help out through their genuine desire to see children participate and develop in Rugby League. Unfortunately we must face the reality that a minority of others will join a club to gain access to children and create an air of acceptability about their role, justifying their close contact with children. Developing credibility is an essential part of any abuser's 'grooming process', not only grooming the child to 'make love to their minds' (quote from a convicted paedophile) but also grooming other coaches or parents i.e. becoming the best volunteer and making themselves indispensable. The last stage to enable someone to offend against a child is viewed as grooming the environment i.e. creating a justifiable reason for getting the child alone.

The RFL encourage coaches and volunteers not to take children on journeys in their car alone.

If all alternatives have been exhausted and an adult has to transport a child alone there are a number of safety measures that should be put in place to minimise the risk:

- Clubs should ensure that the driver like all coaches/volunteers who have access to children in your organisation should have agreed to a CRB check being carried out on them.
- Clubs should ensure that the driver has a vehicle which is fit for purpose, i.e. passed its MOT and is adequately insured.
- Clubs should check that the driver has an appropriate and valid driving licence.
- Parents/guardians should be informed of the person who will be transporting their child, the reasons why and how long the journey will take.
- A person other than the planned driver should talk to the child about transport arrangements to check they are comfortable about the plans.
- The driver should attempt to have more than one child in the car.
- When dropping children off after a match or training session, coaches/volunteers should alternate which child is dropped off last. Ideally two children would be left off at an agreed point i.e. one of their family homes.
- Ensure that children are aware of their rights and they have someone to turn to or report any concerns they may have. If a culture of safety is created within your club then the child is more likely to talk to another person if they are feeling uncomfortable about a situation.
- Children should wear an appropriate seatbelt that complies with current legislation, and be instructed to behave responsibly in vehicles at all times.
- The driver should have emergency breakdown cover, access to a mobile phone and contact details for the parent/guardian of the children they are transporting.

If parents make arrangements between themselves about transport to matches this is a private arrangements. However if the club/coach make the arrangements eg who will travel with whom, they become liable in the event that something goes wrong if correct procedures haven't been followed.

Away Fixtures

Travelling to away fixtures is a regular event for many junior clubs. Trips may vary from short journeys across town to play another local team or involve more complicated arrangements involving overnight stays. But even what may appear as the most straightforward of trips will require some level of planning. Communication with all parties is a key issue when planning any journeys: -

- **Children** – they should be aware of the travel plans, venue and time for collection, time of return and any costs. Children should also have a clear understanding of what standard of behaviour is expected of them.
- **Parents** – should be made aware of the above and must have completed a consent form detailing any medical issues that the relevant people should be aware of. Parents should

also have the name and contact details of the relevant person in the event of an emergency.

- **Other coaches/volunteers** – need to be made aware of what their responsibilities are in advance of the trip. If the trip is a long journey, it is important that all coaches / volunteers have an itinerary and each others contact details.

Late collections

These can present clubs and coaches with particular difficulties. Parents/guardians should be provided with guidelines addressing the issue and outlining their responsibility and the consequences of late collections. Clubs should have contact numbers for parents/guardians and if possible be provided with an alternative contact number. Parents/guardians should have a contact number for the club/coach to inform them of emergencies and possible late collections.

In the event of a late collection, coaches/volunteers should: -

- Attempt to contact the parent/guardian.
- Make contact with the Club Welfare Officer to inform them of the situation.
- Wait with the young person. Wherever possible do so in the company of other people.
- Remind parents of the policy in relation to late collections.

In the event of a late collection, coaches/volunteers should not: -

- Take the child to their own home or to any other location.
- Ask the child to wait alone with them in their vehicle.
- Send the child home with another person without parental permission.

Parents should be informed that it is not the responsibility of the Club to transport children if the parent/guardian is delayed.