



# Rugby League

Parents Handbook





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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Rugby League Parents Handbook!

As a parent, you play a crucial role in your child's Rugby League journey. This handbook is designed to equip you with key information, ensuring that your child has a safe, supportive, and enjoyable experience in the sport.

## **How to Use This Handbook**

Inside, you'll find essential details on topics like safeguarding, concussion protocols, respect, anti-doping policies, and social media guidelines. The information is presented concisely, with links to further resources where needed.

Rugby League is about more than just competition—it's about teamwork, respect, and community. As a parent, you can help foster these values both on and off the field.

## **Your Role as a Rugby League Parent**

To create the best possible environment for young players, we encourage all parents to embrace the Respect Code of Conduct:

- Support and encourage your child's enjoyment of the game—without pressuring them.
- Respect all players, coaches, referees, and officials.
- Encourage fair play and positive behaviour.
- Never engage in abusive, aggressive, or discriminatory behaviour.
- Keep the game fun!

For the full Respect Code, visit: [RUGBY-LEAGUE.COM/RESPECT](https://www.rugby-league.com/respect)

By working together, we can ensure that Rugby League remains a welcoming, inclusive, and rewarding experience for every young athlete.

Let's make this season a great one!



# **Primary Rugby League (Ages 6-11)**

## **Introduction to Primary Rugby League**

Primary Rugby League is designed to give young players the best possible start in the sport by focusing on fun, development, and inclusivity. The aim is to create an engaging and safe environment where children can build skills, grow confidence, and develop a love for the game.

## **Key Features of Primary Rugby League**

- All players get equal opportunities – everyone plays!
- Small-sided games on smaller pitches for more involvement.
- Modified rules to prioritize fun and safety.
- No referees – games are managed by coaches.
- No scorekeeping – the focus is on learning, not winning.

## **The Role of Parents in Primary Rugby League**

As a parent, you are a key influence on your child's experience in the sport. Your support, encouragement, and positive attitude help create the right environment for their growth.

## What Should You Do as a Parent?

- Encourage fair play and teamwork – effort matters more than results.
- Keep the game fun – avoid shouting instructions from the sidelines.
- Respect officials, coaches, and other parents.
- Help your child enjoy the game, not just win.
- Ensure safety – if your child gets hurt, encourage them to take a break.
- No alcohol or smoking near the pitch.

If a child suffers a head injury, they must sit out – see concussion info [HERE](#).

## Why This Approach Works

- More touches on the ball = faster skill development.
- More involvement = better confidence and motivation.
- Equal playing time = positive experiences for all.
- Child-centred coaching focuses on development over winning.

## What Should You See from Coaches?

- A focus on effort, learning, and enjoyment.
- Encouragement, not pressure.
- A structured but flexible approach to help all players succeed.
- Safe play practices with clear boundaries for behaviour.

Resources are available on the RFL website - [Primary RL](#)

If you have concerns about your child's experience, you can reach out to the RFL at [Customer.Experience@RLcommercial.co.uk](mailto:Customer.Experience@RLcommercial.co.uk)





Discrimination has a negative impact on everyone involved in Rugby League. It causes players, coaches, referees, volunteers and families to turn away from the game. We want a sport where every act of discrimination is challenged, leading to an outcome that is fair and proportionate.

Rugby League has a Zero Tolerance approach to discrimination. Zero Tolerance means the RFL policy of not tolerating Unacceptable Language and Behaviour of any type and imposing severe penalties with no exceptions. Unacceptable Language and Behaviour is defined as follows:

**Unacceptable Language and/or Behaviour** means any comments, threats, chanting, discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, bullying, victimisation, or incitement to hatred or abuse or any other action (implied, intended, or unintended) which targets individuals or groups on the grounds of: age, colour, ethnic origin, disability (including physical, sensory, cognitive, intellectual, mental illness or some chronic disease), gender identity, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, nationality or national origin, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic background or is otherwise in breach of the Respect Policy, Tackle It or the RFL's Equity Statement. If you witness or your child experiences discrimination as a player during a game, you can make a report to the referee. If you feel unable to do this or the incident didn't occur during a game, you can tell us, and we will act promptly and respond appropriately. We have put together a form in the link below for you to complete and detail the incident that you would like to report

### **Reporting Discrimination ([rugby-league.com](https://www.rugby-league.com))**

Alternatively, you can make a report via email to [compliance@rfl.co.uk](mailto:compliance@rfl.co.uk)

If you would like to speak to someone at the RFL about discrimination or equality, diversity and inclusion in Rugby League, you can contact

**[Ben.Abberstein@rfl.co.uk](mailto:Ben.Abberstein@rfl.co.uk)**



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All Community and Professional participants are subject to Anti-Doping rules, which means any one can be tested – any place, any time, even those under the age of 18.

As minors, if players are selected for testing, they will always be accompanied by a chaperone. There is more information here on rights and responsibilities and the testing process. **Testing Process for Minors | UK Anti-Doping ([ukad.org.uk](https://www.ukad.org.uk))**

Adopting a **FOOD FIRST** approach will give players the right nutrients and proteins they need, at the right time. There's some great tips and ideas here **Food-First | UK Anti-Doping ([ukad.org.uk](https://www.ukad.org.uk))**

Any positive test for banned substances (ingredients within medication or supplements, recreational drugs, performance or image enhancing drugs) will result in the participant being banned, whether they intended to cheat or not – this is their **STRICT LIABILITY**. There are **11 Rules** which players are subject to - by adopting a nutrition-based approach the risk of breaking these rules is reduced significantly as is the risk of damage to your child's health.

## **The Anti-Doping Rules | UK Anti-Doping**

Understanding times of transition for your child, will help to support them to avoid the potential temptation of doping. Times of transition such as not getting on scholarship, being released from academies, injuries, social changes and life stresses can all be times of risk.

Everyone has the right to safe, fair, clean sport which they can enjoy and achieve success through determination which isn't impaired by those who cheat. A food first approach is a positive way to participate in a health and clean way.

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Although gambling is age restricted, parents should be aware that Rugby League participants are subject to rules preventing them from betting on Rugby League matches in both the Professional and Community game.

Whilst in the younger age groups this shouldn't be an issue, please be mindful as they progress through the ages and stages of their Rugby League life that betting on Rugby League as a Rugby League participant is not permitted. The potential negative impacts of gambling and gambling addictions should also be considered.

If you are concerned about your child and gambling related harm, please [click here](#) for supporting agencies.





Good Practice Guidelines on the use of social media - The rapid rise and use of social media has been phenomenal, and it can be difficult to keep up with the new sites and/or apps. Parents have concerns around online safety for their children and clubs have both these concerns and concerns around their club image and how they are portrayed by its members.

Guidance for Parents - All people involved in Rugby League should work towards promoting the game, their club, and the sport. Negative postings about your child's club or coach could result in legal proceedings and/or expulsions. Taking to posting on social media will never sort out a problem or concern that you may have with your child's experience of Rugby League. If you have any issues or concerns, then you should address this with the Coach or Club Welfare Officer.

Do not post photos of other players without the child's and parents' permission. Check your child's accounts to ensure they are both safe and sensible in their postings and friendship groups. Be aware that children can experience online bullying and this can be a very isolating experience for a child, check that your child is safe online by visiting the NSPCC website by clicking here [\*\*Online safety and social media in sport | CPSU\*\*](#)

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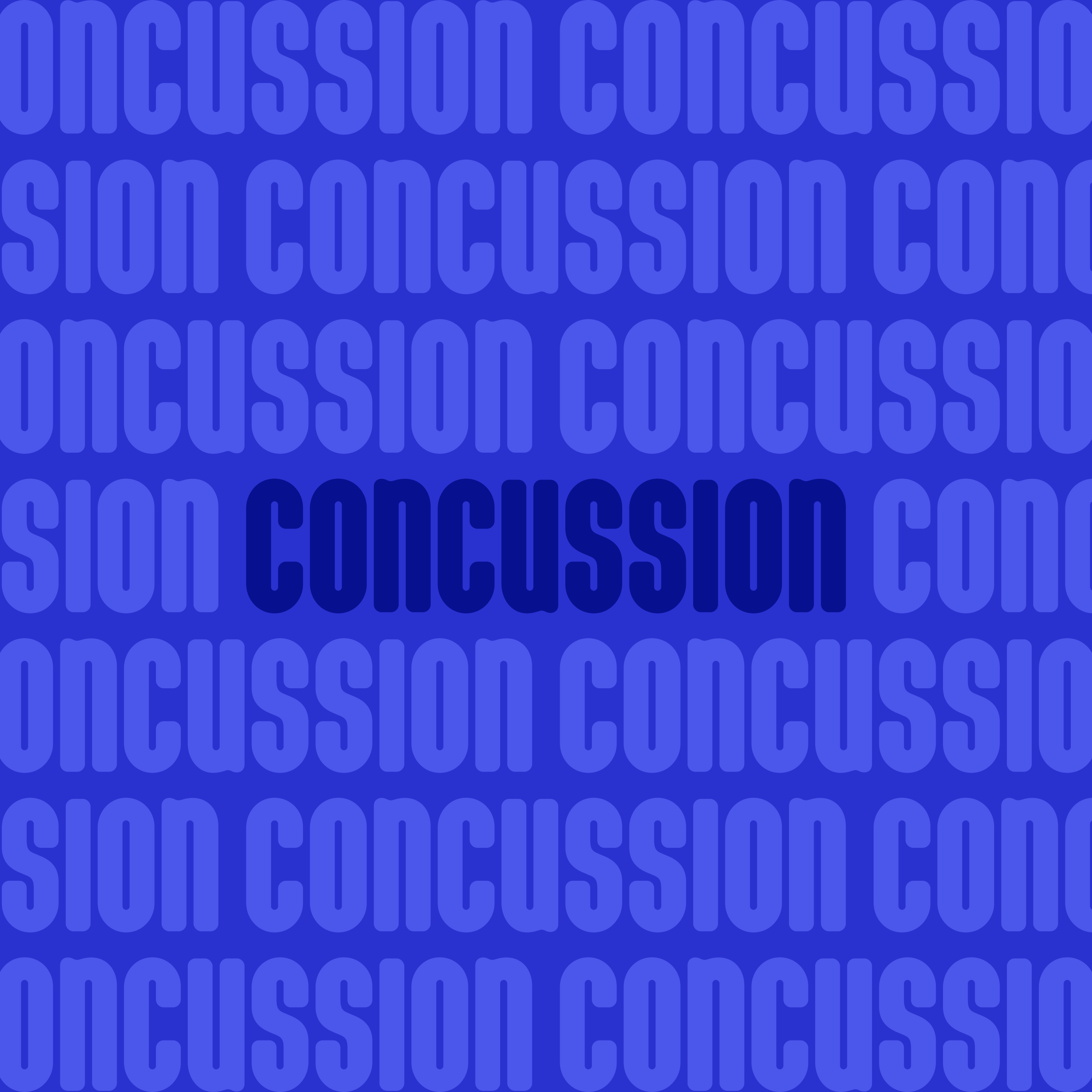
The RFL is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children in the sport of Rugby League. For over a decade we have worked closely with the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) and NSPCC to develop robust policy and procedures to safeguard children, achieving the NSPCC & CPSU's National Advanced Standards for safeguarding and protecting children in sport in 2008. We work closely with all our clubs and statutory agencies to ensure that safeguarding children is prioritised. Any allegation, suspicion of harm, or concern is taken very seriously and responded to swiftly, fairly and appropriately.

Everyone shares the responsibility for safeguarding and creating safe environments in Rugby League whether as a parent, coach, spectator, or club official. This means that everyone should operate and demonstrate exemplary behaviour to both safeguard children and protect all personnel from allegations of abuse or poor practice.

The RFL Safeguarding Policy can be found [here](#)

The safeguarding team can be contacted on [safeguarding@rfl.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@rfl.co.uk)

For more information on Safeguarding please [click here](#)



Rugby League is a contact sport and so the risk of concussion is high.

Parents should recognise the signs and symptoms of concussion and follow the **Sport and Recreation Alliance guidelines** for its management both at matches, training, and whilst resting and recovering at home.

The key messages are:

- **IF IN DOUBT, SIT THEM OUT** (remove from the field and stay off)
- Call 111 or see a doctor in the 24 hours following concussion
- Don't leave your child unattended and ensure they rest appropriately in the 24 – 48 hours following injury (avoiding screen time and physical activity)
- Return to sport takes a minimum of 3 weeks, even when symptoms resolve quickly.

No player should return to any sport (not just Rugby League) until symptoms have subsided and a graduated return to normal (school or work life) has been followed. Returning to school or work must be prioritised ahead of the return to sport.

Returning early carries the risk of prolonged recovery, further injury, worsening symptoms or second impact syndrome, which can be fatal. Coaches and First Aiders are aware of signs and symptoms and the requirement to remove a player from the field, but you have a role to play here too – you know your child best.

It's important to look after your child's brain health, encourage them to share symptoms, leave the field if they don't feel right and be patient with their return to sport.

If symptoms have not eased or have worsened 4 weeks post injury – take your child to see your GP.

In addition, we have created a resource to help Players understand the concussion protocols within the Community Game.

The concussion passport has been designed to help support players look after their brain health following a concussion, allowing appropriate time for the brain to recover in line with Sport Recreation Alliance and Rugby Football League (RFL) protocol. The document explains in detail what a player must do if they have suffered a head injury, including recognising additional symptoms, how they report this, confirmation of a head assessment (after contacting NHS 111) and the graduated return to activity table. The passport can be found [HERE](#)



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RESPECT is a game-wide campaign spanning from community Rugby League to Super League, aimed at creating a positive environment for all participants and tackling anti-social or discriminatory behaviour.

Put simply, RESPECT means treating others the way we would want to be treated. A culture of respect makes Rugby League an even greater game for everyone—players, coaches, officials, parents, and spectators alike.

### **Parents' & Spectators' Code of Conduct**

All parents and spectators should commit to the following principles:

- Encourage all participants to uphold the values of respect and fair play.
- Do not force an unwilling child to participate in the sport.
- Remember: children play Rugby League for their own enjoyment, not yours.
- Recognise that sport is about personal and team development, not just winning.
- Condemn all violent or illegal acts—whether by players, coaches, officials, or spectators.
- Respect match officials' decisions—do not argue or complain about them.

### **Positive Matchday Behaviour**

- No unsporting or discriminatory language, harassment, or aggressive behaviour.
- Encourage players to play by the rules and respect opposition players and officials.
- Support all players with positive cheering—do not jeer, taunt, or intimidate others.
- Never ridicule a player for making a mistake—respect their efforts.
- Follow the directions of Ground Managers and matchday staff at all times.

## **Respecting the Game Environment**

- Do not arrive at a game under the influence of alcohol.
- Do not bring alcohol to the game.
- If alcohol is available at the ground, consume only in designated licensed areas.

### **Commitment to Respect**

By following these guidelines, parents and spectators help ensure that Rugby League remains a safe, enjoyable, and inclusive sport for all.

For more details and campaign resources, visit:

**[www.rugby-league.com/respect](http://www.rugby-league.com/respect)**





There are lots of ways to get involved with our sport, regardless of your age, gender, physical ability and much more.

Ages and Stages is the easy way to find out which form of Rugby League is best suited to you and your child and has lots of different resources and downloads to support your participation in the sport. Even if you are already at a club there are lots of coaching and development aids available on the page.

Please check out <https://www.rugby-league.com/ages-and-stages> for further information.

