



RUGBY LEAGUE IRELAND

Concussion & Head Injury Policy 2025

1. Purpose

Rugby League Ireland (RLI) recognises concussion as a serious brain injury and is committed to protecting the health, safety, and long-term welfare of all participants. This policy establishes RLI's mandatory approach to the recognition, management, and return to rugby league following suspected or confirmed concussion or head injury.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all players, coaches, referees, match officials, volunteers, support personnel, and any other individuals participating in or delivering rugby league activities under the jurisdiction of Rugby League Ireland.

3. Policy Statement

RLI adopts a strict 'Recognise and Remove' approach. Any player with a suspected concussion or head injury must be immediately removed from play or training and must not return to any rugby league activity until they have completed a recognised Graduated Return-to-Play protocol and received appropriate external medical clearance.

4. Definition of Concussion

Concussion is a traumatic brain injury caused by biomechanical forces. It may result from a direct blow to the head, face, or neck, or from a blow elsewhere on the body with an impulsive force transmitted to the head. Symptoms may develop immediately or evolve over time and may occur with or without loss of consciousness.

5. Recognition of Concussion

Signs and symptoms may include headache, dizziness, confusion, memory disturbance, nausea, balance problems, visual disturbance, behavioural change, or loss of consciousness. Any suspicion of concussion must be treated seriously. Where doubt exists, the player must be removed from play.

6. Immediate Removal from Play

Any player suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury must be immediately removed from play or training. There is no same-day return to play under any circumstances. Removal decisions may be made by referees, coaches, medical personnel, team officials, or the player themselves. Player welfare takes absolute priority over competition.

7. Medical Management and Clearance

RLI does not appoint or employ a Medical Officer. Diagnosis and medical management of concussion must be undertaken by an appropriately qualified external healthcare professional, such as a registered medical practitioner or physiotherapist. Written medical clearance is required before progression to full contact training and competition.

8. Return-to-Play

Players diagnosed with concussion must complete RLI's Graduated Return-to-Play Protocol. Progression through each stage requires the player to remain symptom-free. Any recurrence of symptoms requires regression to the previous stage following medical advice.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

Players must report symptoms honestly and comply with medical advice. Coaches and team officials must enforce removal from play and support recovery. Referees have authority to stop play and require removal. Clubs must ensure no pressure is placed on players to return prematurely.

10. Education and Awareness

RLI will promote concussion awareness and education for players, coaches, referees, and volunteers through guidance materials and online resources. Clubs are encouraged to reinforce concussion education at all levels of participation.

11. Non-Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action under RLI regulations. Any individual or club that permits or encourages a premature return to play places participants at significant risk and may be subject to sanction.

12. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier if required due to changes in medical guidance, Sport Ireland standards, or International Rugby League requirements.