



# RUGBY LEAGUE IRELAND

Safeguarding Policies  
and Procedures

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## **1. INTRODUCTION & USE OF THIS POLICY**

This policy aims to assist people in roles within Rugby League Irelands (RLI) affiliated clubs and teams by both protecting them through clear guidance and by providing clear procedures for protecting Children's/Young People's welfare. The welfare of the Children/Young People is of the paramount importance in all of our activities.

Children/Young People as defined in applicable law who participate in Rugby league activities should be able to take part in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harassment and abuse. It is the responsibility of everyone involved in Rugby League within Ireland to protect these Children/Young People. For the purposes of this document, all individuals under the age of 18 are considered as Children/Young People.

Parents and Carers have the primary responsibility for the care and protection of their Children/Young People. Rugby League Ireland also has a duty of care to promote the welfare and safety of Children/ Young People. This policy aims to foster the development of physical and social qualities that come from Rugby League.

Every member of the organisation should always show respect and understanding for each member's rights, overall development, safety and welfare.

Every member of Rugby League Ireland has a duty of care to all Children/Young People and duty to recognise and respond to the possibility of abuse or neglect, so as to ensure that the most effective steps are taken to protect the Children/Young People and to contribute to the ongoing safety of Children/Young People.

Every member should conduct themselves in a way that embraces the ethos and principles of Rugby League Ireland, which are highlighted in the relevant Codes of Conduct. Every member should also understand their role and be aware of their responsibilities in the welfare and protection of Children/Young People.

## **2. GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

**Designated Liaison Person** – is required to ensure the mandated person reports any concerns. The role description is provided further in the policy.

**Mandated person** – is the National Governance Officer within Rugby League Ireland. The role description is provided further in the policy.

**Safeguarding Officer** – all clubs must have a Safeguarding Officer once there are Children/Young People in the club. They must be an affiliated member of Rugby League Ireland, Garda vetted and have completed the following:

- Safeguarding 1 - Child Welfare & Protection Basic Awareness Workshop
- Safeguarding 2 – Club Children's Officer Training

**Designated Liaison Person** – RLI is responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures within all clubs are followed. The chair will automatically assume the role if no one can be adequately recruited or selected for the position.

**Parent/Carer** - For this document when referring to parent/carers, the term is used to include parents, Legal Carers, and/or carer, with full responsibility for the Children/Young People.

**Leader** – Rugby League Ireland coaches/managers/selectors and all adults who are appointed and agree to accept responsibility for the welfare of Children/Young People of any club/squad/group. In addition, parents that are assisting on an ongoing basis must be Garda vetted.

**Coaches** – refers to any individual, involved in the practice of teaching and coaching any of the Rugby League Ireland disciplines through Rugby League Ireland affiliated clubs

**Affiliated Bodies** – refers to Rugby League Ireland affiliated Clubs, Affiliated Bodies, Teams and/or Branches.

**Affiliated Member (Playing or Committee)** – refers to any member of Rugby League Ireland, be they a player, official or volunteer, where specified refers to any person appointed to a Club, Regional or National Committee (who is affiliated to Rugby League Ireland).

**Statutory Authorities** – this refers to the government entities tasked with receiving reports or concerns relating to child abuse, namely the Social Work departments of TUSLA (Child and family agency) and the Garda Síochana (Ireland)

### **3. ABBREVIATIONS**

RLI – Rugby League Ireland

Code of Ethics – Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children’s Sport

NVB – National Vetting Bureau the Garda Vetting organisation responsible for processing vetting checks in the Republic of Ireland

Access NI - Garda Vetting organisation responsible for processing vetting checks in Northern Ireland

ROI – Republic of Ireland

NI – Northern Ireland

SI –Sport Ireland

SO –Safeguarding Officer

For the Republic of Ireland, RLI Clubs and Affiliated Bodies should reference;

- Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Dept. of Health & Children 2017
- Children's First Act 2015
- Children's First Guidance 2017
- Our Duty to Care, Dept. of Health & Children 2002
- Criminal Law (sexual offences) Act 2017
- The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998

For Northern Ireland, RLI clubs and Affiliated Bodies within should reference;

- Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sport
- Keeping Children Safe 2017
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People 2017
- Regional Core Child Protection Policy and Procedures, 2017

### **4. OUR SAFEGUARDING STRUCTURE**

It is important that RLI has an effective, coordinated approach to providing efficient standards of Children/Young people protection and safeguarding in our Sport. Clubs must have a Safeguarding Officer in position, and all affiliated clubs should be made aware of reporting structures within the RLI.

We have a National Mandated Person and a Designated Liaison Person at National level. Please refer to relevant section within this policy for their details.

This structure aids the RLI as an NGB to support our clubs, teams and leagues with the most effective framework to safeguard the Children/Young People within our sport. Our structure in terms of safeguarding our members is detailed in the diagram below.



## **5. RLI SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES**

Safeguarding is about being proactive and putting measures in place in advance of any contact with Children/Young People and to ensure that Children/Young People are going to be kept safe. This should include:

- Ensuring staff/volunteers are properly checked through the vetting process when they are recruited
- Guidelines for people who come into contact with Children/Young People as part of their role to ensure they know what they need to do to keep them safe
- Guidelines for planning an event or activity with Children/Young People and putting measures in place to minimise the risk of safeguarding issues occurring

People working with Children/Young People within RLI and its Affiliated clubs/teams, should be aware of the responsibility they have in protecting Children/Young People from harm, and ensuring we are providing a safe environment for our Children/Young People. They should be aware of policies being implemented to do so and most importantly be aware of their Safeguarding Officer's role and responsibilities.

## **6. THE DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON (NATIONAL CHILDRENS OFFICER)**

Is an individual who is familiar with and carries out the reporting procedure as contained in the RLI Safeguarding Children & Young People policy and the Children First policy.

The DLP is responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures within an organisation are followed so that Children/Young People's welfare and protection concerns are referred promptly to TUSLA and/or An Garda Síochána. The DLP should record all concerns or allegations of Children/Young People abuse brought to his or her attention, and the actions taken in relation to a concern or allegation of abuse

Designated Liaison Person must:

- Ensure that the National Mandated person is following the reporting procedure
- Consult with Club Safeguarding Officer or the Person Reporting abuse on the specific details of the incident.
- Consult informally with the duty social worker in TUSLA to clarify areas of concerns regarding Children/Young People if a report is being made jointly with the organisations Mandated Person
- Inform/report to the local duty social worker in TUSLA (Child and Family Agency) or Gardai (in an emergency) of concerns about individual Children/Young People (this will need to be done in conjunction with the Mandated Person)
- Liaise with the Mandated Person on matters of concern regarding Children/Young People's welfare and safety at club, regional and national level
- Liaise with Senior Board members where an RLI member is required to step aside while maintaining confidentiality
- Maintain a record of action taken by the RLI for any concerns or allegations of abuse made to the statutory authorities
- Be aware of the local and national contacts and services available in relation to Children/ Young People's protection
- Communicate with statutory agencies and parents as required
- Assist with the implementation of the Children/Young People's protection training requirements for RLI, liaising with the National Mandated Person
- Support the National Mandated person with the implementation of policies and procedures within the RLI to deal with persistent poor practice
- Act as an advisory source for matters of confidentiality, record keeping and data protection
- Where required act as an Authorised Liaison Person for the purposes of Garda Vetting

## **7. MANDATED PERSON**

The role of the mandated person is summarised in the Children First Act (2015) where it places a legal obligation on certain people, many of whom are professionals, who have contact with Children/Young People and who, because of their qualifications, training and/or employment role, are in a key position to help protect Children/Young People from harm. RLI has a voluntary mandated person, and our reporting procedure states clearly that mandated persons must report concerns of harm above a threshold under the Children First Act 2015 (Children First Guidance). Where a mandated person knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect that Children/Young People have been harmed, are being harmed, or are at risk of being harmed, they must report that knowledge, belief or suspicion to the Authorised Person within TUSLA. (Children First Act).

## **8. THE CLUB SAFEGUARDING OFFICER**

The Safeguarding officer role includes:

- Ensuring the Child Safeguarding Statement is up to date and displayed where Children/Young People can see it.
- Promoting awareness and implementation of the RLI's Safeguarding Children/Young People policy among young members and their parents/Carers. This could be achieved by the production / distribution of information leaflets, notices or banners, establishing a Children's/Young People's specific website/noticeboard section, or regular information meetings for Children/Young people and their parents/Carers
- Influencing policy and practice within the club/team to prioritise Children's/Young People's needs
- Ensuring that Children/Young People know how to make concerns known to appropriate adults or agencies.
- Encouraging the appropriate involvement of parents/Carers.
- Acting as an advisory resource to Sports Leaders on best practice in Children's/Young People's sport
- Reporting regularly to their relevant Executive Committee of the affiliated club
- Monitoring changes in membership and following up any unusual dropout, absenteeism or club transfers by Children/Young People or Sports Leaders
- Ensuring that the Children/Young People have a voice in their sporting environment and ensuring that there are steps Children/Young people can take to express concerns about their activities / experiences.
- Facilitating parents' information sessions at the start of the season.
- Ensuring each member signs an annual membership/entry form that includes signing up to the code of conduct
- Having knowledge of categories and indicators of abuse
- Undertaking training in relation to safeguarding/Children/Young People's protection
- Being familiar with and able to carry out reporting procedures as outlined by RLI
- Communicating with parents and/or agencies as appropriate
- Liaising with the Branch DLP and Club Safeguarding Officer with regards to safeguarding/child protection training needs
- Being aware of local contacts and services in relation to safeguarding, e.g. principal and duty social workers and their contact details.
- Informing the relevant authorities regarding serious concerns about individual Children/Young People
- Reporting persistent poor practice to the National Children's Officer .

## **9. RLI REQUIREMENTS FOR SAFEGUARDING OFFICERS**

To ensure comprehensive oversight and protection for all Children/Young People, it is a legal and moral requirement to appoint a responsible adult to act as a Safeguarding Officer in every club with Children/Young People involved.

The Safeguarding Officer must be made known to RLI at the start of every season before Children/Young People are registered.

Key RLI requirements for Safeguarding Officers:

1. Must be Garda vetted
2. Must be affiliated to RLI
3. Must complete Safeguarding 1 and 2 training
4. Ensure that the Risk assessment is reviewed and confirmed to RLI
5. Ensure that the Child Safeguarding Statement is visible at the venue of play/website

\*With regards to the Risk Assessment and Safeguarding Statement, these are legally required documents for Affiliated Clubs working with Children/Young People in the Republic of Ireland.

## **10. RLI – SAFEGUARDING VALUES**

As the National Governing Body for the sport of Rugby League in Ireland, we have an important role to play in the standards and values we promote through our sport.

Our Safeguarding values in promoting a positive sporting environment are as follows:

- **Fair Play**

We believe that by engraining this as a core safeguarding value, people will show respect for their fellow players, coaches, court officials, event organisers and parents.

- **Equality**

We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to play and be involved in our sport regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or socio-economic status.

- **Quality Environment for Development**

We believe that we have a responsibility to offer our affiliated members the opportunity to participate in Rugby League in a safe environment. We also believe that we have an important role in the nurturing and development of our Children/Young People and can use our position to provide this environment.

## **11. POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

RLI understands the need to support both volunteers and coaches in their roles in working with Children/Young People. We strive to offer best practice in our work with Children/Young People, and in order to do so have a number of policies and procedures that support this policy. A list is provided at the end.

It is critical that we have structures within our affiliated clubs which promote good practice and an ethical approach which offers good leadership within the structures of the organisation. There must be a strong commitment present within affiliated clubs in RLI to ensure the safety and welfare of Children/Young People.

Effective communication within the organisation is essential in terms of addressing any safeguarding issues concerning children/young people. It is important that affiliated clubs maintain accurate records in such cases. It is also important that confidentiality is practised and information in such cases is passed onto people only in the best interests of the child/young person.

The welfare of Children/Young People is of paramount importance within RLI and its affiliated clubs.

## **12. DISCIPLINARY & COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES**

Every affiliated club within RLI should take a proactive approach to deal with issues surrounding safeguarding. Complaints should be dealt with in a timely manner, with all parties concerned in the process protected from public scrutiny. All affiliated clubs adopt the RLI's Complaints and Disciplinary procedures as a requirement of affiliation.

## **13. PRACTICE & PROCEDURES**

The following must be implemented across our affiliated clubs:

- Clubs must appoint a Safeguarding Officer where underage players are involved
- The Code of Conduct must be promoted within your club as a source of detailing what behaviour is acceptable from all participants including players, parents, coaches, committee members and officials.
- The Code of Conduct must be adhered to as a requirement of affiliation, and all members should have signed via their membership/entry forms, prior to the commencement of the Rugby League season.
- In the case of safeguarding Children/Young People, any complaints or issues concerning the welfare of a child/young person should be made to the Club Safeguarding Officer.
- All complaints relating to safeguarding should be responded to as soon as possible and seek to be resolved internally within the Affiliated club within 5 working days.
- If a complaint is of a serious nature and identifies a potential category of abuse in terms of Safeguarding, it must be passed on to the National Mandated Person and/or National Designated Liaison Person.
- Written confidential records relating to any case of misconduct or in relation to poor practice, should be stored securely, and accessed only by people who need to know.
- Safeguarding Officers should always look to resolve complaints of poor practice within their club and should look to take informal action where possible in such cases.
- All volunteers working with Children/Young People must be vetted
- All clubs with Children/Young People must complete a safeguarding risk assessment and Child Safeguarding Statement and return it to the Mandated Person
- The Child Safeguarding Statement must be visible at the affiliated clubs venue of play/website and be made accessible to those who wish to view it.

## **14. RECRUITMENT OF VOLUNTEERS/COACHES**

Throughout the early years of Children/Young People's participation in Rugby League, adults shape and foster the experience they're going to have within the sport. It is important, taking this into account, that volunteers who are recruited to work with Children/Young People are adequately supported and trained to be competent in such roles.

It is the position of RLI that all persons who are involved in coaching Children/Young People must have the following:

- Garda Vetting
- Safeguarding Level 1 Training
- Be a member of RLI
- Completed a Rugby League Coaching Award



## **15. EDUCATION & TRAINING**

Safeguarding Officers in affiliated clubs should be working with their executive committee to ensure that those persons working with Children/Young People within the RLI have received adequate training and support. It is an affiliated clubs responsibility to ensure that their sports leaders are provided with training, education and vetting opportunities. All committee members, coaches and parents/Carers, with unsupervised access to Children/Young People, should have received training to a minimum Safeguarding Level 1.

The roles of Safeguarding Officer and Designated Liaison Person also have specific training available related to their roles. The Safeguarding Officer must complete Safeguarding Level 2 / Designated Safeguarding Children Officer Training. The Designated Liaison Person must complete the Safeguarding Level 3 Course / Designated Safeguarding Children Officer Training.

## **16. PRACTICE**

All leaders working with Children/Young People have a responsibility to behave and communicate in a positive manner. The overall aim of applying our Safeguarding values on a practical level is so we can provide Children/Young People with a safe, fun environment.

## **17. IDENTIFYING CATEGORIES OF ABUSE**

It is generally acknowledged that there are different types of Child /Young Person abuse – Physical, Sexual, Emotional and Neglect are the recognised forms of abuse that a child/young person may experience.

### Neglect

Neglect - Neglect is the failure to meet a child/young person's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, such that it is likely to result in significant harm as outlined in Children First National Guidance.

- It may involve failing to provide adequate foods, shelter and clothing.
- Failing to protect a vulnerable person from physical harm or danger.
- Failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- Lack of stimulation or lack of supervision.
- Failure of the child to thrive and have their growth altered on the basis of actions taken by their parent/carer
- Abandonment or desertion

### Emotional

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child/young person such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's / young person's emotional development.

- It may involve conveying to Children/Young People that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.
  - It may involve causing Children/Young People frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of them.
  - Smothering a child's development through over-protection can also be a form of abuse.
  - Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.
  - Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child/young person to emotional abuse.
  - Ongoing family conflict and violence

### Physical

Physical abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child/young person, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include

- Hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot.
- Inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.
- Poisoning
- Use of excessive force in handling

### Sexual

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing Children/Young People to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. The activities may involve:

- Physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts.
- Non-contact activities, such as involving children/young people in looking at or the production of pornographic material
- Watching sexual activities or encouraging Children/Young People to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- Sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person
- Abuse of positions of trust

### Exploitation

Exploitation is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over Children/Young People; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a Child/Young People or situation for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms, such as:

- Child labour including slavery or servitude
- Engagement in criminal activity
- Organised begging
- Benefit or other financial fraud
- Child trafficking or child sexual exploitation

It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of Children/Young People for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

*It should be remembered that sexual activity involving a child/young person may be sexual abuse even if the child/young person concerned does not themselves recognise it as abusive.*

### Bullying

Bullying has been recognised and defined as the repeated use of power by one or more persons intentionally to harm, hurt or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others. It can take many forms, but the three main types are:

- Physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft)
- Verbal (e.g. racist or sectarian remarks, threats, name-calling)
- Emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of their peer group).

The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to Children/Young People, to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self-harm). It is important that leaders within our Affiliated clubs have a pro-active approach to reducing the risk of bullying and educating their players/ coaches/ officials on the impacts of bullying.

Signs of abuse can be physical, behavioural or developmental. In most circumstances, it is the behavioural signs which are first observed which could involve the Child/Young Person becoming withdrawn, showing distrust of adults, or regressive behaviour.

*If you think a Child/young person is in immediate danger and you cannot contact TUSLA you should contact the Gardai/PSNI without delay.*

### Grounds for concern relating to abuse

As outlined in this section of the policy referring to the categories of abuse, grounds for concern relating to child abuse can exist where you have the following:

- A specific indication from Children/Young People that they have been abused
- An account from a person who saw Children/Young People being abused
- Evidence such an injury or behaviour that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to have been caused in any other way
- Any possible concerns that the Children//Young People may have been sexually abused
- Consistent indication that over a period of time there is evidence that a child/young person may be suffering from physical or emotional neglect

In circumstances such as this, it is important that in recognising and understanding the consequences of abuse that the details of such grounds for concern are recorded and reported appropriately; reports should be made to the mandated person in RLI. If you feel Children/Young People are at immediate risk of harm, you should contact the Garda Síochána/PSNI.

### **18. GUIDANCE FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE**

People working with Children/Young People should provide a safe environment, where the sports leader acts as a role model for all those with whom they are working. Additionally, they should at all times in their work with Children/Young People:

- Praise and encourage Children/Young People in their actions and efforts
- Support and promote fair play within your club
- Understand the developmental needs of children in their care
- Coaches and/or supervisors must avoid implementing the following practices with their Affiliated clubs:
  - Transporting Children/Young People on journeys alone in their car
  - Spending excessive lengths of time with children away from the group Coaches and/or supervisors should never:
  - Taking coaching sessions alone with children
  - Take Children/Young People to their home
  - Abuse a child in any manner as categorized under the forms of abuse
  - Take any illegal substances or use alcohol before coaching, during away trips or during events
- Parents / Carers should be encouraged to support all Children/Young People in their Affiliated Clubs and conduct themselves in a manner which is in line with the RLI Code of Conduct
- Children/Young People take example from the adults around them, and how they conduct themselves in a sporting environment. It is important that parents/Carers take into account the following:
  - Be aware of the commitment of coaches/managers/committee members and their role within the Affiliated Clubs.
  - Show respect for the coaches and their decisions.
  - Behave appropriately at events.
  - Encourage fair play and set out the importance for their child to play by the rules.
  - Focus on the importance for the child to enjoy the sport, and do not have an over-emphasis on winning.
  - Have an interest in their child's/children progress within the Affiliated Clubs and develop a positive relationship with coaches to ensure that there are no barriers to discussing concerns regarding their welfare.

### **19. FURTHER GUIDANCE IN IMPLEMENTING BEST PRACTICE**

This policy is supported by relevant guidance documents and policies which are designed to assist our coaches and volunteers in implementing best practice for Children/Young People.

These guidance documents are focused on the following areas:

- Code of Conduct
- Vetting Policy
- Complaints & Disciplinary Policy
- Recruitment & Selection Guidelines
- Travel & Away Trips Guidelines
- Social Media & Photography Guidelines
- Supervision Guidelines It is important that all members working with children and young people are aware of the contents of these policies and guidelines, and that they are adopted within the affiliated clubs of RLI.

## **20. PROTECTION**

The most important goal of our work with children is that all clubs and affiliated bodies create an environment for our Children/Young People that is safe and enjoyable for all involved. By adopting the policies and guidance provided by RLI, affiliated clubs are taking positive steps towards achieving this goal.

The two objectives of safeguarding Children/Young People are achieved by first of all creating child protection policies and procedures whereby we have a structure in which our coaches, children, members, officials, volunteers and parents/Carers can be confident in the provision of Rugby League for Children/Young People in our affiliated clubs. The second element of safeguarding is creating a child-centred environment whereby we can ensure that Children/Young People are comfortable to voice any concerns they feel are impacting on their welfare and enjoyment of the sport.

## **21. AREAS OF RISK WITHIN RLI**

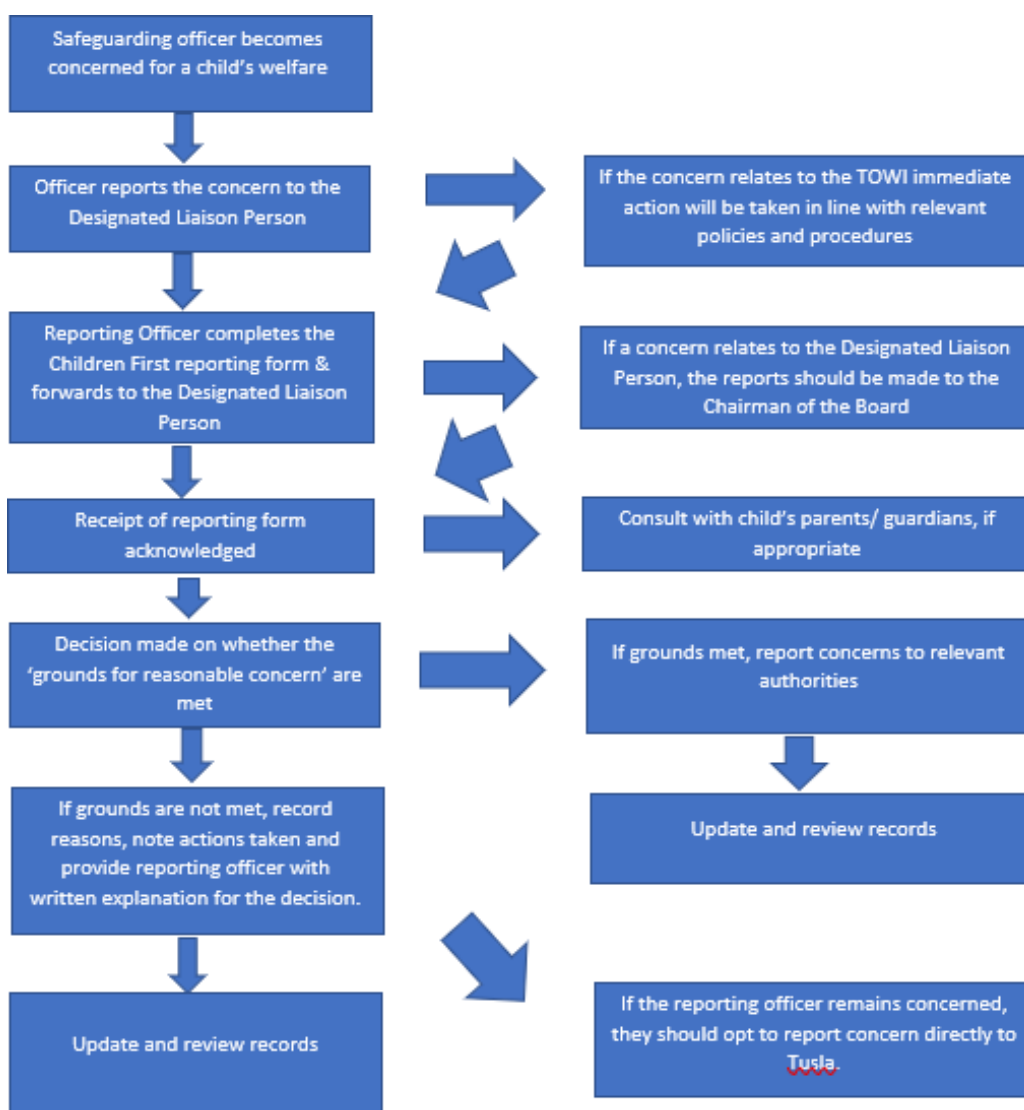
It is important that those within our sport are aware of the potential risks that could face us in our work with Children/Young People, and that there is an awareness of what could potentially put children at the risk of harm. Potential issues that we must try to avoid in our work with Children/Young People could be among others:

- Children/Young People not being adequately supervised whilst attending their Rugby League club, or on away trips with an affiliated body
- Overtraining and Burnout.
- Use of substances such as drugs and alcohol.
- Behaviour which is not in line with the RLI's Code of Conduct. Coaches and leaders within Rugby League clubs should ensure that:
  - Activities are age-appropriate and are performed in a safe environment.
  - Children/Young People are in a healthy condition to participate in an activity.
  - There is not an over-emphasis on winning but more a culture of highlighting the effort made by a child.
  - Involve the child/young person as much as possible in the activity.
  - Discipline is handled in a fair and transparent manner and that rules are set out prior to the activity.
  - Provide feedback which highlights positive elements of performance as well as developmental points.
  - Have a solid, trusting relationship with children so that if they have any concerns that these can be communicated.
  - The language used in communication is appropriate.
  - Activities are fun, enjoyable and varied.
  - Reasonable measures are taken to ensure that the environment is safe for Children/Young People to play in.

## 22. REPORTING PROCESS

The process set out in the below diagram outlines where the reporting process should lead to in a summarised manner where a Safeguarding Officer can take informal action in the case of a report of poor practice, or formal action if the case of abuse/ground for concern. It also outlines what to do in the event of a report of suspected child abuse in a Rugby League affiliated body.

The process for reporting an external concern regarding a child follows the same principles of reporting an internal concern. Issues concerning a child's welfare cannot be ignored regardless of whether abuse has occurred within RLI or not. It is essential that all individuals working with Children/Young People are aware of this process and who to contact in this regard. Ensuring that people in the role of coach/supervisor are adequately trained in terms of Safeguarding training and that if guidance is required they know where they can seek it; help and advice is always available from the RLI's Mandated Person.



### **23. RESPONDING TO NON-RECENT ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE**

It is possible that allegations of abuse can be made several years after an actual incident. This may be because of a change in circumstances for either the survivor or the alleged perpetrator. Any non-recent allegations must follow the current RLI safeguarding procedures. This process applies also if the survivor is still under the age of 18. If there are grounds for concern, then statutory authorities must be informed. (The following points should also be considered;

- Clearly establish with the adult complainant/child/young person if there may be any children currently at risk of harm from the person they are saying abused them as a child.
- Advise the person making the complaint that they should inform the Gardai/PSNI. Encourage them to do so while acknowledging the brave steps they have already taken in beginning to talk about their experience as a child. It is important that the person knows that there is a likelihood that an abuser will not have stopped abusing after their individual abuse ended and if the person harmed them they could be continuing to cause harm to others. This needs to be done without reinforcing the inappropriate guilt the survivor may already have for not coming forward earlier.
- If the complainant refuses to talk to the statutory authorities but has provided you with enough identifying factors, then this information **MUST** be shared with the Gardai/PSNI. This breach of the complainants' confidence is only appropriate if there is any potential that the alleged perpetrator is still a risk to children or could face prosecution. Remember, the welfare of any children currently at risk is paramount. This must take priority over any request of confidentiality from the person providing you with the information/complaint. This should be explained to them at the earliest possible stage
- Offer support to the complainant when making a formal complaint to the Gardai/PSNI
- Signpost the complainant to support agencies that can provide counselling, for example:

When an adult making a complaint chooses not to report the matter to the police, and you have already discussed the possibility of any child still being at risk you **MUST** follow the RLI reporting procedures and inform the Gardai/PSNI or TUSLA immediately of any identifying features of the allegation including the name of the alleged abuser. The person making the complaint should be informed that this is the organisation's moral and legal responsibility. If the individual wishes to remain anonymous this should be respected but again explaining that without any further co-operation there may be little action the Gardai/PSNI can take to protect others. Encourage them to talk directly to TUSLA, in order to enable social services to consider if there is any action they can take to protect Children/Young People at risk, as their threshold for intervention is lower than the evidence required for any criminal justice prosecution.