



# *Burnley R.U.F.C.*



## **GUIDANCE ON PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**

There are a number of principles that should be followed within the sport when the activity involves physical contact.

Physical contact in rugby should always be intended to meet the child's needs, NOT the adults. Physical contact should only be used if the aim is to :

- Develop sports skills or techniques
- To treat an injury
- To prevent an injury or accident from occurring
- To meet the requirements of the game

The adult should explain the nature and reason for the physical contact to the child reinforcing the teaching or coaching skill. Unless the situation is an emergency, the adult should ask the child for permission.

It is good practice for the Rugby Club as part of an induction process or pack for new members to explain to parents or carers and their child to give written guidance about any physical contact that will be required as part of that activity. Young people should be encouraged to voice concerns they have if any physical contact makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened to the Club Welfare Officer or another responsible adult who must then report this to the Club Welfare Officer.

Contact must not involve touching the genital area, buttocks, breasts or any other part of the body that may cause a child distress or embarrassment. Physical contact should always take place in an open or public environment and must not take place in secret or out of sight of others.

### **Physical Punishment**

Any form of physical punishment of children is unlawful by coaches, volunteers and professionals, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour unless it is by way of

restraint. It is particularly important that adults understand this both to protect their own position and the overall reputation of the Club.

## **Contact As Part of Coaching**

There are specific circumstances which will require coaches to come into physical contact with children and young people from time to time in the course of their duties. Examples will include activities where safe practice is critical, e.g. the introduction or development of scrummaging. Adults should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and of the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted.

Touching young participants, including well intentioned informal and formal gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm, can, if repeated regularly, lead to the possibility of questions being raised. As a general principle adults in positions of responsibility should not make gratuitous or unnecessary physical contact with children and young people. It is particularly unwise to attribute frequent touching to their teaching or coaching style or as a way of relating to young participants.

## **Responding to distress and success**

There may be occasions where a distressed young person needs comfort and reassurance which may include physical comforting such as a caring parent would give. Physical contact may also be required to prevent an accident or injury and this would be wholly appropriate. A young person or coach may also want to mark a success or achievement with a hug or other gesture. Adults should use their discretion in such cases to ensure that what is (and what is seen by others present) normal and natural does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same young person over a period of time. It should also be considered that what, to an adult may seem to be appropriate, may not be shared by a young person.

## **Sports Science and Medicine**

There may be some roles within Rugby Union where physical contact is a requirement of the role, particularly sports science or medicine. These tasks should only be undertaken by properly trained or qualified practitioners. This guidance does not seek to replace the specific guidance and codes of practice developed for those professionals and reference should be made to the appropriate body for that discipline.