

Young Match Officials

“The child in the middle”

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A child is under 18



RUGBY LEAGUE. It's a whole different ballgame®



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Duty of Care

Any child that takes part in any activity organised by your club comes under your duty of care whether members or not

Forums with young MOs

- RFL have conducted several youth forums
- Assured responses would be anonymous
- Given open questions to get THEIR views
- Asked questions around their experiences officiating
- Attending Society meetings to highlight safeguarding – each society has a Welfare Officer to support young officials

What young officials told us

- Abuse is very common
- Most abuse comes from the touchlines – parents and coaches
- You can hear coaches shouting at you and shouting at players
- Can be intimidating sometimes
- Coaches set the example of behaviour and often they are abusive

What young officials told us

- One female stated that she felt it was harder for girls – they had to prove themselves
- The amount of abuse can be dependent on the particular club and their standard of coaching
- The Touchline Manager is usually related to one of the players and can be biased

What young officials told us

- Officiating the younger age groups generally meant more abuse because the abuse tends to come from the parents (and they are more likely to watch their children when they are younger)
- Very difficult for your parents to hear you being abused just doing your job
- When starting to officiate, abuse can put you off the game

Examples of abuse

- Constant criticism of decisions resulting in a 13 year old child crying uncontrollably and the Coach confronting his parent to abuse him as well
- Belittling, swearing, constant questioning of decisions and ability
- Lowering of self-esteem and confidence

“The child in the middle”

- We would not speak to our child in this way
- Would not allow others to speak to our child in this way
- We would not speak to the oppositions players in this way
- So why OK to speak to the child in the middle in this way
- The child is on their own no team mates or parents to offer support

Parents of young match officials

- Parents find it particularly difficult
- They have not chosen for the child to be a match official – sometimes against their wishes
- Could you stand by and listen to your child being abused – especially by other adults?

What we need to do

- Touchline Managers who are Respected and Supported - Who can and will challenge – consistently
- Report abuse of young match officials
- Zero tolerance – Tackle IT! – ‘doing nothing is not an option’
- RESPECT

Match Day

- Welcome all visitors to your club
- Touchline Manager to introduce themselves to the match official
- Create an environment that is conducive to children and young people enjoying the game – not ‘win at all costs’
- Respond quickly don’t let abuse escalate
- Praise ALL players

Remember

These children are in our
care too

The welfare of the child is
paramount