



**Present:** (Role and club identifies where possible)

Tim Wilbraham (NLD Age Grade Team), Jim McDonald (NLD Safeguarding & Paviors RFC), Pete Welsh (Melbourne RFC), Jenna Bonser (RFU Club Support Team), Danny Cardew (NLD Age Grade Team), Richard Waterhouse (NLD Age Grade Team & Chesterfield RFC), Andrew Osmond (Referee organiser and Lincoln RFC), Liz Taylor (Buxton RFC), Steve Gunter (Sleaford RFC), Chris Walker, Tom Duce (Sleaford RFC), Charlie Bennett (Chesterfield RFC)

**Thank you to all of you for attending and to Pete, Jim and Danny for their excellent contributions. Thanks also to Jenna who has provided relevant links to resources**

## Minutes

### **1) Pete Welsh, Melbourne RFC: Managing the transition of players from colts into adult rugby (There are some relevant links to RFU resources at the bottom of this section)**

Pete described his role as former Colts / Academy coach who now manages the club's 2<sup>nd</sup> XV / Development team and the progression of young players into the adult teams at Melbourne. The club runs a colts / academy team involving the U16 to U18 age groups. They currently have 18 players regularly appearing for the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> teams who could also play at colts level.

Pete highlighted two important themes

- **Practical**
  - Aligning colts training with the adults
  - Bringing in the U16 group is a constructive and timely manner
  - Managing the physicality of the game
  - Administration
- **Psychological**
  - Communicating with the age group players, parents and coaches coming into the colts / academy and transition process
  - Managing expectations
    - Who is enjoying the environment? Some will already have made the decision that they want to move through to adult rugby and are ready to move on
    - Who is questioning their involvement as they move into rugby at an older age?

### **Practical element explained**

- When combining with adults in training, pick sessions that are appropriate
- Mix age grades and adults up if possible / appropriate
- Colts play on Saturdays
  - Experience an environment that is similar to adult rugby
  - Where possible, arrange for them to play at the same time as senior teams (where changing facilities and showers are appropriate)
  - Treat the players like adults

### **Psychological aspect explained**

- 'Almost a culling process'  
You cannot hide adult rugby from the younger players.
  - Some are drawn to it – they can become frustrated if they feel held back by other younger players if a better standard is available and this in turn has a negative affect on the colts team
  - Conversely, as players see what adult rugby is like, some come to the decision that it is not for them. It is important for them to discover this

- Ensuring the players have the opportunity to work with different coaches is useful
- Age Group coaches may be reluctant to hand their players over to the transition process.
  - It is important for one head coach to run the colts and transition programme - it is not possible run the programme by committee
  - The former age grade coaches will often remain to help and support. Some may even be qualified to take on a leading role at a later stage
- Decisions related to adult team selection involving younger players has to be player centred and the club has to acknowledge that sometimes the win is less important than nurturing and developing talent

#### **Notes from discussion in the meeting**

- U16 coaches can often struggle to let go (Andrew Osmond)
- Some coaches can be guilty of micro-managing their players from the side lines during matches (Andrew Osmond)
- Managing the atmosphere on the touchline is important to ensure a good experience for young players (Andrew Osmond)
- Preparation for adult rugby has always got to be a priority so it is important that they start to take more responsibility (Jim McDonald). His players at Paviers would run their own warm up
- Spalding colts are training with their adult teams (Tom Duce)

#### **Relevant RFU resources to 18+ transition to adult rugby::**

<https://www.englandrugby.com/dxdam/68/68a966e2-b1db-4e61-9379-d9c199f54292/AG%20to%20Adult%20Off-Field.pdf>

#### **2) Jim McDonald, NLD Safeguarding officer and Paviers RFC: Applications for 'playing up'**

- All applications for playing up must be submitted to NLD. Jim is the person who processes the applications.
- All links to the application online forms for the playing up process are now on the NLDRFU website <https://nlrdfu.co.uk/governance/safeguarding-2/nld-safeguarding-children/>
- The process has become more efficient, but a benefit of the old paper-based system was that Level 2 coaches and the parents would have to sign. He doesn't have evidence of that level of agreement on the new system
- Jim will be emailing all clubs to reinforce the process. There will be an audit during December
- The reason for declaring must be named on the form (whoever is doing the form must have their DBS)
- Jim requested that reasonable time should be allowed for him to process applications. For example 10.30 on a Friday night is not reasonable.

#### **Notes from discussion the meeting**

It was acknowledged that clubs needed to be careful with the provision of showers for younger players. Some clubs still have communal showers that are not appropriate for playing at the same time as adult teams. Showering separately is the preferred option.

#### **Relevant RFU resources to safeguarding:**

- **RugbySafe:**
  - <https://keepyourbootson.co.uk/rugbysafe/>
  - <https://www.englandrugby.com/participation/playing/player-welfare-rugby-safe>
- **Safeguarding:**
  - <https://www.englandrugby.com/governance/safeguarding>
- **Regulations – playing up/down forms:**
  - <https://www.englandrugby.com/governance/rules-and-regulations/regulations>

### 3) Danny Cardew (NLD Age Grade Team): NLDRFU website developments

Danny has carried out lots of development work on the website. He highlighted a couple of things for our attention:

- Volunteer and Player of the month awards now feature on the home page of the website
  - A promotional vehicle for the website
  - Danny requested that people make nominations if they see good examples when visiting other clubs
- Most popular features
  - Results service
  - Disciplinary reports
- Danny requested suggestions for further developments.
  - Danny asked whether a FAQ section or fixture pool would help.
  - He also said that news items from clubs would also be very welcome
  - One suggestion was for a monthly photograph competition from clubs

#### Agenda items not discussed:

- What do you believe can be done to improve the playing experience and club environment for young people?
- What NLD activity would help retention of U14 to U16 players?
- Are your male club members aware of the need to promote the growth of girls and women's rugby?)

We will discuss these remaining points at the next Age Grade Forum on 9<sup>th</sup> January.

Also, next time, Chris Johnson will report on the disciplinary process for Age Grade players. In light of reports of incidents on the pitch and on the side lines of matches, this will be a very important feature and I would encourage all clubs to attend.

#### Next Age Grade Forum: 7.00pm to 8.00pm: Monday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023

[https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting\\_MjEyODdhMWUtMzg3MC00ZGQxLWEyOGItNjc4NjY0ODQ0ODVm%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22f21bc2b6-8c28-4624-ae86-e5817edd8a8b%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%2232209e38-5c71-487c-8bb8-643a5a4d2831%22%7d](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_MjEyODdhMWUtMzg3MC00ZGQxLWEyOGItNjc4NjY0ODQ0ODVm%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22f21bc2b6-8c28-4624-ae86-e5817edd8a8b%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%2232209e38-5c71-487c-8bb8-643a5a4d2831%22%7d)