Northumberland Rugby
Inclusion Policy
SEMH and Neurodiversity

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1. **Statement of Inclusion:** *Northumberland Rugby is committed to providing equal opportunities for all children and adults, regardless of their abilities or conditions, to participate in rugby.*

   The intended effect of this policy will be to ensure that:

   - Participant's additional needs are known to coaching volunteers and other professionals so that support is routinely put into place quickly.
   - Volunteers, including but not limited to coaches and referees, have the knowledge, understanding and skills to provide the right support for children and young people who have SEMH or Neurodiversity needs, whichever club they attend.
   - Volunteers, including but not limited to coaches and referees, feel supported and know where to access guidance and additional information regarding SEMH and neurodiversity.
   - Parents know they can reasonably expect some support from their local club, to allow their children with additional needs participate in rugby.
   - The aim is to attract and retain players, coaches and referees and give everyone the opportunity to grow and remain in their roles.

2. **Definitions and Terminology:** *While Northumberland Rugby is committed to providing equal opportunities for all, this policy is specific to people with Neurodiversity or SEMH needs.*

Neurodiversity is a concept that recognises and celebrates the natural variation in neurological traits and conditions among individuals. It emphasises the idea that neurological differences, including but not limited to conditions such as Autism, ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), dyslexia, and others, are a normal part of human diversity rather than solely as disorders to be corrected or cured. The neurodiversity paradigm advocates for acceptance, inclusion, and accommodation of individuals with different neurological profiles, promoting the idea that diverse minds contribute to the richness of human society and should be valued and supported accordingly.

SEMH (Social, Emotional, and Mental Health) refers to a broad category of challenges and conditions that affect an individual's social interactions, emotional well-being, and mental health. These conditions encompass a wide range of emotional and behavioural difficulties, including but not limited to anxiety disorders, depression, conduct disorders, attachment disorders, self-esteem issues, and emotional regulation challenges. SEMH conditions can manifest in various ways, impacting a person's ability to form relationships, cope with stress, regulate their emotions, and engage effectively in social and educational settings. Supporting individuals with SEMH conditions often involves a combination of therapeutic interventions, counselling, and strategies to promote emotional resilience and positive social functioning.

3. **Accessibility*:*** *As Northumberland Rugby is committed to providing equal opportunities for all,* each club is accessible to children with SEMH and Neurodiversity. In some circumstances, where a participant's needs cannot be met, Northumberland Rugby will attempt reasonable modifications where possible to ensure accessibility and inclusion. This will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

4. **Training:** *As Northumberland Rugby is committed to providing equal opportunities for all* , we have ongoing development, coaches, volunteers, and volunteers will receive training on how to work with children who have SEMH and neurodiversity conditions.

    - Training will cover communication strategies, behaviour management, and understanding the specific needs of these children.

    - Training will also support de-escalation techniques to support the emotional regulation of players in a high paced environment.

    - In the first instance, Northumberland Rugby aims for at least one member of each club to have at least some level of training.

    - Access to continual development and support will be offered to a provided to clubs and coaches.

5. **Individualised Plans:** Each child is unique, diverse, and comes with differing experiences. For this reason, it is important to recognise and treat everyone as an individual. Northumberland Rugby acknowledges that it is difficult to understand the needs of participants with Neurodiversity and SEMH needs and for that reason, we have a document called "Player on a Page". This is an optional document to be used where the coach and parents agree the payer would benefit from additional support. An example can be found at the end of this document. It is only expected that a minority of players will have such a document.

- Player on a Page indicates the specific needs, medical condition, or diagnosis that a child may have, or may be currently reviewing within a professional context, e.g., SEN referral within a school, through CYPS/ CAMHs (Child and Young Person Services or Child and Adolescent mental health services) or through medical professionals.

- Player on a Page indicates to those supporting the player strategies, including communication, that support their emotional or sensory regulation.

- These are not a way of targeting, labelling, or excluding a child. They are designed to promote and develop inclusion.

- They are produced in conjunction with the parents, guardians, or professionals within the player's life, as well as the coaching team that will be working with the player.

- If you feel you have a player, or child, who will benefit for a Player on a Page speak to the lead age grade coach and/or safeguarding officer at your club.

6. **Inclusive Practices:** As Northumberland Rugby is committed to providing equal opportunities for all, promoting inclusive practices within the rugby community involves actively seeking opportunities to integrate children with SEMH and neurodiversity conditions into existing teams and activities whenever possible. By doing so, we foster an environment that not only values diversity but also recognises the unique strengths and contributions of every child. This approach not only benefits the children with SEMH and neurodiversity conditions but also enriches the experiences of their peers, promoting empathy, understanding, and teamwork. Inclusion isn't just a checkbox; it's a philosophy that enhances the fabric of our rugby community, creating an environment where all children can learn, grow, and play together, regardless of their individual challenges or abilities.

7. **Anti-Discrimination:** As Northumberland Rugby is committed to providing equal opportunities for all, discrimination, bullying, or harassment of children with SEMH or neurodiversity conditions will not be tolerated. Players, coaches, and all participants deserve to be treated with respect. Any reasonable suspicion of discriminatory behaviour will be addressed in the first instance by additional training. In on-going or extreme scenarios, cases will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

8. **Feedback and Evaluation:** If there are any concerns parents and players can speak to CSO (Club safeguarding officer), Lead Coach of Age Group or Chair of age grade from the relevant club. Information held within an player on a page document will be reviewed 4 weeks after the initial completion for any updates and further observations, then at Christmas, then at the end of a season before moving up to new age grade so players have the summer to understand how the game will change when they return in September.

9. **Safety:** As Northumberland Rugby is committed to providing equal opportunities for all, risk factors are considered to ensure that the safety of all participants is a top priority.

    - In most circumstances SEMH and Neurodiverse conditions will not lead to additional safety concerns and will be covered by usual safety protocols.

    - In cases where players specific conditions may cause injury to another player, for example a behavioural difficulty which causes a player to hurt others, it is up to the family of the child and the coach to access whether the player is currently fit to be on the field. Reasonable alternative

provisions may be made. This should be made apparent on the relevant "player on a page" document.

10. **Community Engagement:** Northumberland Rugby currently have a working group committed to improving diversity and inclusion for those with SEMH and Neurodiverse conditions. This includes volunteers from existing clubs, referees as well as external professionals who currently or have previously worked in specialist educational settings.

    Neuro Group Comprises:
    Claire Sharpe - County Office Administrator and Office Manager – with an interest in neuro diversity.
    Nicola Smith - CB Joint Chair of Age Grade. Nicola is also a Social Care Assessment Officer / Apprentice Social Worker with a background of 20 years in the mental health team as well as inpatient assistant on a CYPS Assessment Ward.
    Phil Mole - Special Educational Needs Coordinator for Byker Primary school
    Lee Hill - Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour Support Advisory Teacher, Northumberland.
    James Forbes – Chair of Novos RFC
    Liam Nicholls – RFU Club Development Officer
    Craig Wrightson – Referees and County Vice President

11. **Confidentiality and GPDR:** Northumberland Rugby recognises the importance of respecting the privacy and confidentiality of children with SEMH and neurodiversity conditions and their families. Conditions and needs of players, coaches or referees will not be discussed with anyone except those listed on a "player on a page" document. If a specific case is being used for training circumstances or sent for external guidance all personal or identifiable data will be anonymised.

    - Paper copies of player on a page documents will be held by parents, and any copies held pitch side will be anonymised to prevent information being shared outside GDPR compliant procedure.
    - Further copies of player on a page documents or other documents relating to children will be stored in line with individual club's GDPR compliant safeguarding polices.

12. **Review and Revision:** Northumberland Rugby recognises the importance of continual review, revision and improvement. As such this policy will be reviewed annually at the start of each season by the Directors and Board of Northumberland County Rugby Limited.

Ratified date:
By:
Next review due:

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