

Mini & Junior Coaching Handbook

2025-26

Introduction

Lymm Rugby Club, having recently finished in 3rd place in the National League 2 North, is one of the highest ranking amateur clubs in England (with no paid players, everyone who plays for us, does so for the love of game). We are at the heart of our community and we cherish that position as it means our success is due in no small part to the contribution that the Mini and Junior Section make. Around 75% of the senior club have come through our M&J section.

We visit local primary schools to talk about how rugby is a game for all and we have great links with Lymm High School, working hard to ensure we support each other. We offer all coaches support and through the RFU training to help them navigate their way through the ages towards the end of having an active and vibrant colts teams. Our overall goal is to encourage as many as possible to continue into senior rugby, ideally at Lymm.

To help us in this progress we also have established an academy for U16 through to U18 (Senior Colts) who benefit from being supported by the James Hutchings Charity that affords specialist training (in addition to the coaches who have progressed with them) and significant exposure to senior teams. This offers the older players the chance to really develop as well as become integrated into our adult teams.

Our ultimate aim is also to try and help all the players develop both on and off the pitch – rugby is still truly the only team sport that embraces all and encourages true diversity. By engaging in the coaching you are not only helping the overall goal of getting as many players through to senior rugby but also making them better individuals too!

I hope you find this resource useful and I encourage you to engage and become part of the coach development programme!

Ian Cope

Mini & Junior Chair

About the Handbook

Supporting our mini and junior coaches is absolutely key to the future success of Lymm Rugby Club.

This handbook explains the practical ways that we organise our coaching to deliver the best possible experiences for young people in a supportive and safe environment.

Our coaching framework isn't a piece of paper or a policy document, it's a shared approach delivered by almost 100 coaches at every training session and every game.

We will always try to help and support our coaches and match officials, so please view this handbook as a constantly evolving guide. Share your thoughts and ideas so that we can keep getting better, both on and off the pitch.

If you have any feedback or questions about the handbook, please contact:

Adam Breeze

M&J Coaching Coordinator

MJcoach@LymmRugby.co.uk

Player Welfare

The well-being of our players is paramount and our approach is based on the highest safeguarding standards.



Team Structure

Each age-grade will have a clear structure of the various roles and responsibilities that are required for a well-managed team.



Coaching Development

Coaches and referees are the lifeblood of our club, we invest in development through courses, resources and shared ideas.

The 'Lymm Way'

Rugby should be played with a smile on your face.

When players have fun, they come back, week after week. Enjoyment is a key building block of our coaching ethos. The 'Lymm Way' is built on a fast, creative, expansive and entertaining style of rugby which cascades down from first team through the age-grades all thanks to the work of our 100 coaching heroes.

One Club Ethos: The Lymm Way

From under 5s to veterans, rugby should be played with a smile on your face. When players have fun, they come back, week after week. Enjoyment is a key building block of our coaching ethos.

More than three-quarters of our first team squad came through the minis and juniors section. This conveyor belt of talent needs constant feeding by our M&J coaches.

The success of our teams has been built on a **fast, creative, expansive and entertaining style** of rugby which cascades down through the age-grades thanks to the work of around 100 coaching heroes.

Our coaches volunteer around 200 hours each year, in all weathers, to help inspire more than 300 boys and girls, teaching skills and values that will last a lifetime. It's sometimes frustrating. It can be stressful. But it's one of the most rewarding things you can ever do.

Which is why at Lymm, we are committed to nurturing and supporting our coaches in whatever ways we can.

100 Coaching Heroes — 100 Unique Personalities and Skills — 1 Common Approach

Philosophy and Core Values

‘Our philosophy is driven by a desire for all our young players to reach their full potential through player centred game based coaching with enjoyment the key priority whilst fully embracing all of the RFU core values.’

Rugby’s core values (TREDS) underpin everything we do at every age. They are instilled in all players and coaches:

- **Teamwork**
- **Respect**
- **Enjoyment**
- **Discipline**
- **Sportsmanship**

We follow RFU codes of conduct and do not stream as we believe in growing the game and increasing participation. We commit to the Half Game rule that gives every player the opportunity to improve alongside their friends.



Player Welfare is our Priority

We adopt the highest standards of safeguarding on and off the pitch. We are committed to the ongoing promotion of the welfare of all participants, who are entitled to feel secure and protected from any form of abuse or neglect and have the right to take part in a safe, respectful and enjoyable environment.

Every coach **must**:

- **Have an Up-to-date DBS check**
- **Complete the Introduction to Safeguarding online course**
- **Do the Headcase concussion awareness online course**

Additionally:

- **Every coach should follow the RFU's Age Grade Codes of Practice**
- **All coaches should be aware of the Activate eLearning programme for injury prevention**
- **Each session or game should have at least one qualified first aider present**

Our Club Safeguarding Officer is **Ralph Tucker** (safeguarding@LymmRugby.co.uk), who should be your first point of contact for any issues relating to the welfare of our players and for completing mandatory DBS checks.

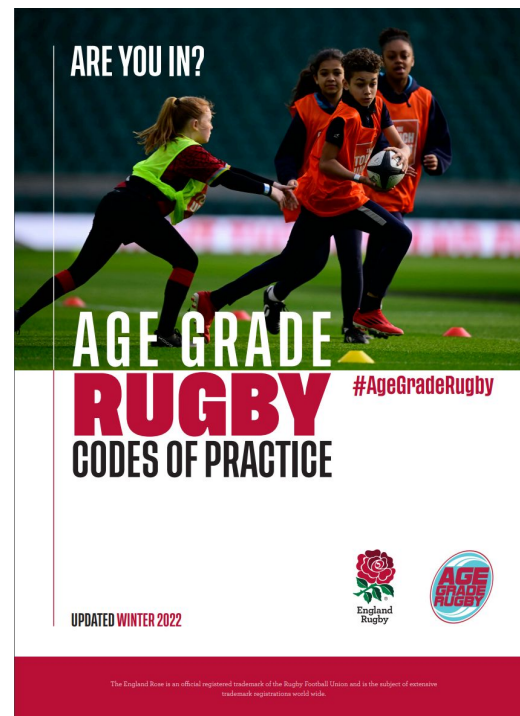
Age Grade Codes of Practice

We are passionate about promoting a positive attitude and behaviour towards the coaching of rugby, so we follow the RFU codes of practice that cover:

- **Developing the Whole Player**
- **Player-centred Approach**
- **Grouping of Players**
- **Playing Up or Down**
- **Combining Age Groups**
- **Summer Activity, Camps and Tours**
- **Minimum Standards for Coaches and Referees**

All coaches should read the codes at:

<https://www.englandrugby.com/participation/coaching/age-grade-rugby/codes-of-practice>



Team Structure

There are many different aspects to running a successful and happy mini or junior rugby team.

Each age-grade team should have:

- **Head Coach** - to manage the team, organise the coaches and plan training sessions
- **Team Manager** - to coordinate fixtures, referees and liaise with parents and other clubs
- **Player Welfare Lead** - to liaise with the Club Safeguarding Officer wherever relevant
- **First Aiders** - specialist courses are encouraged and teams should have a well-stocked first aid kit
- **Referees** - ideally at least two per team need to be trained once contact begins - no ref, no game!
- **Coaches** - to support the Head Coach and provide specialist skills and knowledge

In many circumstances some of these roles will be combined, but it is our experience that as the players get older, there needs to be more coaches involved, so try to recruit volunteers early on and delegate where possible.

Coaching Development

Our coaches are the lifeblood of the club and we are committed to investing in their development. Coaching requires a wide range of skills, whether you have played the game to a high-level or have no playing experience at all. Every volunteer coach has a valuable contribution to make.

- **Each team should follow the recommended minimum standards for coaching and refereeing**
- **Every coach should have clear objectives and plan to attend new courses each season**
- **All coaches should be familiar with the vast range of free coaching resources for each age-grade**
- **The latest RFU courses will be promoted and, where possible, hosted at Lymm**
- **Online resources, videos and webinars will be shared on regular basis (see Appendix for links)**
- **We will facilitate intra-club sessions so that coaches can learn from each other**
- **We'll also invite external specialists and run 'coach the coaches' sessions**
- **Costs will be reimbursed by the club**

The Coach Coordinator will liaise with Head Coaches to record and review qualifications and resources on a regular basis.

Referee Development

Refereeing is a key part of coaching minis and juniors. We encourage as many of coaches as possible to help out.

- **Respect for all match officials should be paramount at every age-grade**
- **And should be communicated on regular basis to all players, coaches and parents**
- **From u9s upwards it becomes really useful to have a couple of qualified referees in each team**
- **England Rugby Introduction to Refereeing award is a great place to start** (3 hours in person + 3 hours online)
- **England Rugby Refereeing award, the Level 2 qualification, is recommended** (2 in-person days + webinars)
- **Referee courses and resources will be shared and promoted**

Any coach wishing to learn more about referring should speak to Jonny Cartwright (j.p.s.cartwright@gmail.com) at the club.

More resources:

<https://www.englishrugby.com/run/refereeing/become-referee/referee-courses>

<https://keepyourbootson.co.uk/referees>

Minimum Standards Summary

Minimum standards of coaching qualifications mean that **nobody** is permitted onto the pitch (whether calling themselves a coach, referee or parent-helper) without having been **DBS checked**; completed the **Headcase Concussion Awareness**; and the **Introduction to Safeguarding eLearning**..

- U5-U8 you should complete the Kids First Tag Rugby course
- U7+ you should be familiar with the Activate (Injury Prevention Exercise Programme)
- U9-U11 you should take the Kids First Contact Rugby course
- **All coaches of contact rugby must take part in TackleSafe workshops**
- U11+ you should be taking various CPD courses as they become available
- **U12+ you must complete the England Rugby Coaching Award and/or Refereeing Awards**
- U13+ you should be considering the England Rugby Advanced Coaching Award
- U14+ you should take the Principles of Scrummaging and Principles of Lineout courses
- **Minimum of one first aider on every pitch (or a qualified and insured health care professional)**

It's the responsibility of Head Coach/Team Manager to ensure that minimum coaching standards are upheld every season.

See the RFU's interactive PDF to find the course for you:

<https://rfu.widen.net/view/pdf/uaiik2csjk/England-Rugby-Training-Courses.pdf?u=hjokav>

Coaching Courses

The successful relationship between the club and our coaches hinges on:

- **An expectation of minimum standards of coaching and player welfare being delivered**
- **Responsibility of coaches to plan and share sessions based on the Codes of Practice**
- **Commitment from the club to reimburse costs and support coach and referee development**



RFU courses are available, in person or online, to all coaches, check out what you can and should take:

<https://www.englandrugby.com/participation/coaching/booking-a-course>

‘Coach the Coaches’

The club will organise a series of regular ‘coach the coaches’ sessions that will be delivered by senior coaches and external guests.

Previous one-hour sessions at the club have included:

- Refereeing Basics (u9-16)
- Tackle and Contact (u9-11)
- Building the Scrum (u11-14)

We encourage all coaches to support and participate in these sessions.



Recruitment and Retention

If you finish the season with more players than you started with - you are winning!

Getting as many children playing and enjoying rugby is the most important metric for our coaches.

To drive this, we visit local primary schools and have close links with Lymm High School. We provide coaches with recruitment flyers and digital assets which can be used to promote mini and junior rugby across social media. The perfect time for this is late-August and early-September each year. We will also host a couple of local schools tag tournaments aimed at different ages during the season which can boost numbers too.

We offer three taster sessions, free of charge, before deciding whether to join and have produced an M&J Player Handbook to share with prospective new recruits.

Other recruitment and retention ideas include:

- Buddy up new recruits with someone from their school
- Run a rugby fun session at Beavers, Cubs, Brownies or Scouts
- Designate a 'Bring a Mate Sunday'
- Put posters in the village, shops, schools, library
- Share positive stories with Lymm Life magazine and across socials
- **Most importantly, keep it fun and the kids will come back**

Team Management

As you progress through the age-grades, team management becomes more important and it's worth finding someone to take on the additional admin that is involved, specifically to oversee:

- annual subs and registration push
- liaison with Alan on catering numbers each week
- enlisting parent volunteers to help with Halfway House
- sharing communications between club and parents
- organising social activities

Fixtures, Festivals and Tours

The club's fixture secretary does an excellent job organising matches for each age-group at the start of the season. He will then allocate pitches and times on the Tuesday for the following Sunday.

It's a good idea to join (or setup if none exist) a Whatsapp group of team managers for your age-grade across Cheshire. This can be really useful for additional games, getting invited to triangular fixtures or sharing ideas with other team managers.

Festivals can be great fun at all ages, so look out for opportunities for your age-group. The club also has a great relationships with clubs in France, Spain and Portugal, which is useful for an end-of-season tour weekend!

Communications

Having good lines of communication with parents is crucial for the smooth running of a team.

Make use of one of the free team management apps to share details of training and fixtures (several teams use Heja, a few use Teamer).

It's also a good idea to set-up two Whatsapp groups for your team:

- one for general parent chat with coaches and each other
- another for one-way comms only for fixture news etc (and doesn't get spammed by parents)

Team managers should cascade information from the club, especially to coaches regarding the latest courses.

It is also important to cultivate good relationships with other local coaches of the same age-grade. These will be your opponents for many years to come, so it's good to communicate with them before and after each fixture. We have developed a simple PDF - 'Welcome to Lymm' - which can be tailored for your team. This introductory guide to the club includes important pitch and clubhouse information that can be shared with visiting teams in advance so that they can pass on to their parents.

If you have photos and reports from fixtures or festivals, send them over to John Case (content@lymmrugby.co.uk) to add to the website.

Your Contacts



Ian Cope

M&J Chair

mjchairman@lymmrugby.co.uk

Ian has overall responsibility for the minis and juniors section.



Ralph Tucker

Safeguarding Officer

safeguarding@lymmrugby.co.uk

Ralph is your first point of reference for all player welfare issues.



Adam Breeze

M&J Coaching Coordinator

MJcoach@LymmRugby.co.uk

Adam supports M&J coaching development requirements.

Your Contacts



Keith Broadbent

M&J Fixture Secretary

juniorfixtures@lymmrugby.co.uk

Keith looks after pitch allocation and fixtures.



Jo Cope

Finance

finance@lymmrugby.co.uk

Jo oversees financial matters and reimburses course costs.



John Case

Website and Digital Communications

content@lymmrugby.co.uk

John is our webmaster, please send him your pics and reports.



Jonny Cartwright

M&J Referee Advisor

j.p.s.cartwright@gmail.com

Jonny is our qualified referee who can help with ref coaching.

Useful Links and Resources

Websites and Publications

There is a huge amount of support for coaches at all levels.

England Rugby

<https://www.englandrugby.com/participation/coaching>

Rugby Coach Weekly

<https://www.rugbycoachweekly.net>

The Rugby Site

<https://www.therugbysite.com>

Rugby Coaching

<https://www.rugbycoaching.tv>

Sportplan (1000 free drills)

<https://www.sportplan.net/drills/Rugby/drills.jsp>

Mini Rugby Coaching Handbook (Munster)

<https://d2cx26qpfwuhvu.cloudfront.net/munster/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/17161210/Mini-manual.pdf>

Rugby Toolbox (NZ site so some laws differ but great for ideas)

<https://www.rugbytoolbox.co.nz>

Kids First Contact Rugby

- What is Kids First Rugby?
- Age Grade Rugby Codes of Practice
- Half Game Rule
- Rules of Play
- The Principles of Play
- Refereeing Children
- Safely Preparing Your Players to Tackle
- Coaching and Refereeing the Tackle
- Coaching and Refereeing the Scrum

Support: 'Beat the Square'

Support: 'Magic Circle'

USE OF FREEZE FRAME

Mini Rugby - 1 v 1 Reduced Activity

How to Play

- 5m x 5m Grid
- Coach calls a colour cone
- Ball carrier and defender run around that colour cone
- Ball Carrier tries to evade tackler and score a try
- Tackler 2 handed touch on shorts
- Max 8 players per grid

Decrease Challenge

- Increase size of grid
- Release tackler later or from further away

Ball Carry & Evasion

Desired outcomes

- Ball Carrier uses footwork and evasion to avoid tackler

What to watch for & Coaching Cues:

BALL CARRIER

- Feet
- Footwork
- Power off the 'inside foot'
- Ball in 2 Hands
- Protect the Ball

Increase Challenge

- Decrease size of grid
- Release ball carrier later or from further
- Include a pass to the ball carrier
- Allow bump tackle
- Allow full tackle
- Make it 2 attacker v 2 defenders

Reflections

- What were activity levels?
- What did players enjoy & learn?

Coaching Questions:

- What are the players who are scoring doing?
- How can you make it difficult for the tackler?

Video Resources

Children will understand new games easier when they see videos - it is worth sharing a few with your parents to reinforce what you are trying to achieve.

Kids First

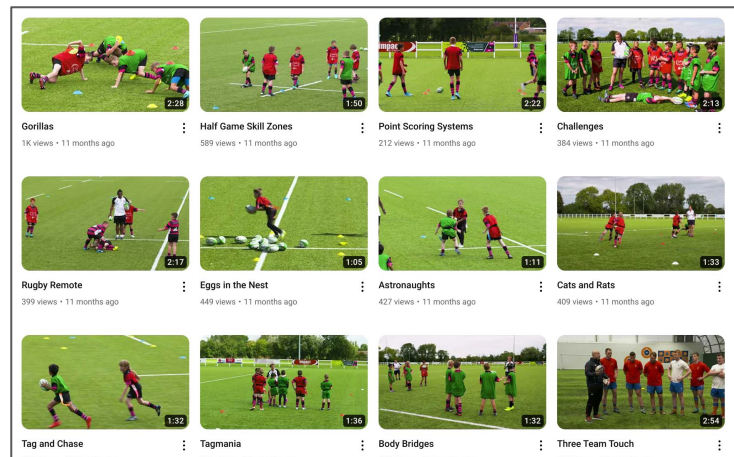
www.englandrugby.com/participation/coaching/kids-first/skills-series

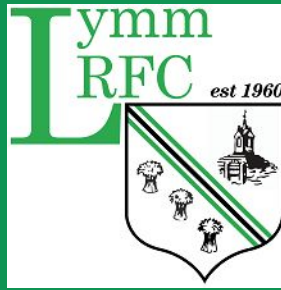
Kids First Skills Series is a library of Game Zones and Skill Zones aimed at specific age groups, with the intention of developing children's skills and confidence.

Keep Your Boots On

<https://www.youtube.com/KeepYourBootsOn/videos>

More than 800 short videos from Activate warmups to gamezone and skillzone ideas at all age-grades. Also includes RFU videos on refereeing; mental health and safeguarding.





Thank You.