

PHYSICAL DISABILITY RUGBY LEAGUE: CLASSIFICATION GUIDANCE & MEDICAL DIAGNOSTICS FORM

1. INTRODUCTION

Physical Disability Rugby League (PDRL) has come a long way in a short space of time. From its inception in Australia to its growth through New Zealand and then the United Kingdom it is one of the key areas of development within the sport.

With this development, there has been a highlighted need to develop and implement a system to bring about equitable performance opportunities on the field of play. As such, International Rugby League has been working with representatives of participating nations and disability sports experts to develop a disability sport classification system using a profiling tool specific to rugby league. Sports classifications enable fair competition.

2. PROFILING

The profile system has been successfully implemented by other sports governing bodies. It will be implemented at representative level and ensure that athletes are able to equitably participate in the game of Physical Disability Rugby League. The profile system assesses an athlete's physical impairment and does not judge the ability to train and develop rugby skills. This means that a good player is good at rugby league not that he has a physical advantage over other players.

Red short classifications

The opportunity to play touch rules, denoted by players wearing red shorts, will be solely determined on a medical basis and for the purpose of player safety. Players that are at significantly heightened risk to injury if tackled, notwithstanding the inherent risk of playing rugby league, must play in red shorts. This will be determined by the athlete's Medical Diagnosis Form (MDF) to be filled in by the athlete's GP or relevant medical professional. This will then further be reviewed by the IRL Medical Subcommittee (MEDSCO) to ensure the athlete is safe to take the field and properly assigned Red Short status.

From this point, if an athlete is deemed safe to play, the athlete will be identified as a Red Shorts Player. A player who must play touch rules can sit in any Sports Class, however, to ensure equitable opportunity to play is maintained, Red Shorts players will be further managed on the field through a points-based system. Further information on this can be found in the International PDRL Laws document.

3. THE CLASSIFICATION PROCESS

3.1 What to expect

To be classified for representative selection in PDRL there are multiple stages, the first being the completion and submission of the MDF, as discussed above in the red shorts section. All athletes wanting to be considered for representative PDRL must complete an MDF and submit to the relevant Nation representative. This will be reviewed to assess whether the athlete can go forward for a classification assessment (more information is available in the [Inclusion-Exclusion Criteria](#) document). If a player has an eligible impairment a request the athlete attends a further physical





assessment will be made. An athlete will be then assigned a day and a time to attend a central venue where this assessment can take place.

If an athlete is ineligible for classification, they will not, at this time, be considered for representative selection. An national federation representative will be in touch to discuss this and offer necessary support and signposting if required.

3.2 **What do you need?**

You will be required to bring all appropriate kit and equipment you would need for the day. This will include, but not be limited to:

- Equipment necessary which is specific to your disability for both indoor and outdoor use e.g., prosthesis, ankle brace
- Studded Boots
- Trainers
- Clothing appropriate for physical activity and climate, but including shorts and t-shirt

3.3 **Overview of Testing**

The assessment for testing will be done in two formal sections, a further observation during a game may be required. The two formal sections of the assessment consist of standard bench tests, typically taking place on a physiotherapist table, and sport specific testing aimed to highlight the effect of the impairment on the ability to perform aspects of rugby league skills.

The assessment can take about an hour; players will be contacted to attend a time slot within a day specific to them for privacy.

These tests are objective and fair and will highlight the level of impairment for each athlete. From this an athlete will be attributed a sports class either A, B or C. More information on the specific design and structure of an international PDRL team, on the field, can be found in the international [PDRL Laws](#) document.

4. **ATHLETE SUPPORTING MEDICAL INFORMATION**

To aid the classifiers decision making, in relation to eligibility, the IRL recommends that athletes submit supporting documents alongside their MDF. This information should provide context or further information relating to the eligible impairment and/or underlying health condition described in the MDF, examples are: hospital discharge letters, clinic letters, allied health professional reports etc.

5. **QUESTIONS & CONTACT**

For further information please contact:

RFL Social & Inclusion Officer and England PDRL Eligibility Officer, Ashleigh Seddon
Ashleigh.seddon@rfl.co.uk

RFL Social & Inclusion Manager, Chris Godfrey chris.godfrey@rfl.co.uk

England Community Lions, Alan Davidson alan.davidson@rfl.uk.com





TEMPLATE LETTER TO DOCTOR

Dear Doctor,

Your patient..... has given permission for us to contact you and for you to provide us with their medical information because he/she is interested in participating in Physical Disability Rugby League (PDRL).

PDRL is a contact sport.

- Most athletes will tackle and be tackled by other players
- Some athletes, with an appropriate medical condition play 'touch' rules. These players wear red shorts to indicate they aren't to tackle or be tackled. However accidental collisions and falls still do occur
- There are no scrums

The information you provide on your patient's health condition will help the International Rugby League (IRL) ensure that they are safe to play and are classified to make sure that play is fair for all players on the pitch.

Your assistance in helping your patient progress towards their physical improvement and involvement in team sports is appreciated. Please can you complete this short form as fully and clearly as possible with the player's health condition, and resulting functional impairment; including any loss of function and indicating whether the condition is permanent, progressive, responding to treatment etc.

Any additional, dated medical documentation you can provide (consultant or physio's reports, MRI scans, X rays) would be extremely useful as supporting evidence for the player to help determine the sports class. This is especially helpful if the condition is complex or changing.

The information you provide is treated as confidential and is only used by the classifiers who are health professionals (doctors or physiotherapists).

A short video highlighting the game of PDRL can be found here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OaJDC1ZDwQg>

Physical disability rugby league at all levels brings with it physical and mental health benefits to its participants.

On behalf of the player and all at PDRL we thank you for your help in completing this form as fully as possible,

Regards,

The IRL Medical Subcommittee (MEDSCO) & Classification Committee





MEDICAL DIAGNOSTIC FORM FOR PLAYERS WITH PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENT

Player Information

Family name:	
Given name/s:	
Gender:	Female Male
Date of Birth:	(dd/mm/yyyy)
Players consent for the medical professional to share the information below with the IRL (sign)	

Medical Information — to be completed, in English by a registered Medical Doctor.

Athlete's Medical Diagnosis (Health Condition): Medical Diagnostic Report and Physical Examination results (for example current physiotherapist or specialist report, X-rays, MRIs or other specific tests)	
Include description of body part/s affected and limitations:	
Primary Impairment/s arising from the Medical Diagnosis (Health Condition): <input type="checkbox"/> Impaired muscle power <input type="checkbox"/> Ataxia <input type="checkbox"/> Athetosis <input type="checkbox"/> Leg length difference <input type="checkbox"/> Hypertonia <input type="checkbox"/> Impaired passive range of motion <input type="checkbox"/> Limb deficiency/loss <input type="checkbox"/> Short stature (height ____ cm)	
Medical condition is: <input type="checkbox"/> Permanent <input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Progressive <input type="checkbox"/> Fluctuating	
Year of onset: _____ year <input type="checkbox"/> Congenital (birth)	
Treatment History:	
Regular Medication — List dosage and reason:	
How does the Impairment affect the athlete's ability to play rugby league?	





Is there a reason this athlete should not participate in rugby league?		
Is there a reason that this athlete should not be tackled (and therefore play 'touch' only noting there remains a likelihood that knocks and accidental collisions could occur)		
Presence of additional medical conditions/diagnoses (and any related management plans) :		
<input type="checkbox"/> Vision impairment <input type="checkbox"/> Intellectual impairment (please note above any behavioural concerns) <input type="checkbox"/> Psychological diagnoses <input type="checkbox"/> Impaired respiratory function <input type="checkbox"/> Joint Hypermobility/instability <input type="checkbox"/> Impaired metabolic functions <input type="checkbox"/> Impaired muscle endurance (e.g. chronic fatigue) <input type="checkbox"/> Impaired cardiovascular functions <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing impairment <input type="checkbox"/> Pain		
I confirm that the above information is accurate. Doctors Name:		
Medical Specialty:		Registration Number:
Address:		
City:	Country:	
Phone:	E-mail:	
Date:	Signature:	
<i>For Official Use Only</i>		
IRL MEDSCO I have reviewed the above and, based on the information provided, confirm that the player has been appropriately identified as a red shorts 'touch' player and that there is no indication that the player should be excluded on the grounds of safety associated with the medical condition(s)		
Signed..... Name Date.....		

Processing and lodgment of this MDF

1. Upon completion, a national federation's Eligibility Officer (EO) will lodge the MDF in the player's national eligibility folder¹
2. Authorised classifiers will be given unique access to the player's national eligibility folder to make a determination on the player's medical eligibility to play PDRL

¹ A player must have completed the Sensitive Data & Operational Rules Consent form (Annex G of the IRL operational rules) before the EO can process and lodge the MDF

