

RUGBY UNION

Richmond launch mental health service for its members amid coronavirus crisis

Owen Slot, Chief Rugby Correspondent

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Coronavirus



The services are already available to Richmond players and staff but the club will open the programme to its members during the pandemic

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Richmond rugby club have responded to the coronavirus crisis by launching a mental wellbeing programme for its entire membership.

The club launched the programme with the explanation that “current events may be placing an increasing burden on many of our club family”.

Richmond have already had the programme in place for its players and staff but have announced that it is now being widened so that it can be available for all members.

Libby Povey, the back-rower in the women's team, has used the services during the last season and applauds the fact that it can now be delivered to a wider group. “When it was announced that this is what they were doing, for mental health and wellbeing, I almost cried,” she said.

“It was exactly what I needed. The club I love so much acknowledges that this is something that is important and they are going to take care of us. It was like the club was giving you a bit of a hug.”

The programme offers access to help through two different industry providers: Care First and Thrive. Care First offers help either online or through a counselling helpline. Thrive is accessed through an app.

Povey said that though she already received help from a local counselling service, the Thrive app was a huge boost to her. "I have struggled with mental wellbeing from an early age," she explained.

"I was with the Richmond Wellbeing Service, which is a fantastic service but that was only once a week and so for the rest of the week I was twiddling my thumbs, getting a bit worse, struggling, still going to training, not wanting it to affect my training or my game.

"This app was a breath of fresh air. It meant that I didn't need to face that wait for a week for my therapy session any more; this gave me the chance to log in every day. It really helped."

Rugby has become increasingly aware, in recent years, of the mental health issues faced by many players. The Rugby Players Association has a confidential helpline which is accessed by, on average, 10 per cent of its members every year. A recent survey of past players found 62 per cent experienced some kind of mental health problem within two years of retiring.

Richmond has led the way in community rugby in providing support for its players. The coronavirus crisis was the catalyst for the same support to be extended to its members.

In a letter to the members, Richmond said: "We believe this is a ground-breaking initiative for a community rugby club and we are proud to enhance the closeness of the Richmond rugby club family."

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