

Codes of Conduct

There are many examples of Codes of Conduct across the sporting world. Most sports have developed their own codes, but they have all been built around the ethos of their own sport.

This resource is in three sections. Firstly it will cover the guiding Principles that should be associated with the development of Codes of Conduct.

Examples of a range of Codes of Conduct will comprise the second section of this Unit. These include Codes for Players, Parents, Coaches, Teachers, Administrators, Officials, and Spectators.

The final section is a guide to child protection. No attempt has been made to produce a standardised document for use across all sports as this has inherent difficulties related to the laws and process within individual countries.

Section one

Principles of Development of Codes of Conduct

Children have a lot to gain from sport. Their natural sense of fun and spontaneity can blossom in positive sporting environments. Sport provides an excellent opportunity for children to learn new skills, become more confident and maximise their own unique potential. These benefits will increase through a positive and progressive approach to the involvement of children in sport that places the needs of the child first and winning and competition second. Winning and losing are an important part of sport but they must be kept in a healthy perspective. A child centred approach to Age Group Sport will return many benefits in terms of the health and well being of future adult populations. The organisation of sport for children should be guided by a set of core values that provide the foundation for all practice.

1 Importance of Childhood

The importance of childhood should be understood and valued by everyone involved in sport. The right to happiness within childhood should be recognised and enhanced at all levels of practice and competition.

2 Needs of Children

All children's sport experiences should be guided by what is best for children. This means that adults should have a basic understanding of the emotional, physical and personal needs of young people. The stages of development and ability of children should guide the types of activity provided within a sport.

3 Integrity in Relationships

Adults interacting with children in a sport environment are in a position of trust and influence. They should always ensure that they treat children with integrity and respect and that the self-esteem of children is enhanced. All adult actions should be guided by what is best for the child and carried out in the context of

respectful and open relationships. Verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of any kind or threat of such abuse is totally unacceptable within sport, as in society in general.

4 Fair Play

All Age Group Sport should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play. The European Code of Sports Ethics defines fair play as: "...much more than playing within the rules. It incorporates the concepts of friendship, respect for others and always playing within the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just a way of behaving. It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of cheating, gamesmanship, doping, violence (both physical and verbal), exploitation, unequal opportunities, excessive commercialisation and corruption.' (European Sports Charter and Code of Ethics. Council of Europe, 1993)

This model of fair play should be incorporated into all sport organisations that have Age Group members as participants.

The principles of fair play should always be emphasized, and organisers should give clear guidelines regarding acceptable standards of behaviour. The importance of participation for each child, best effort and enjoyment rather than winning should be stressed.

Children should be encouraged to win in an open and fair way. Behaviour, which constitutes cheating in any form, is not acceptable.

5 Environment and Ethos

Age Grade Sport should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. Standards of behaviour for adults and children in sport organisations should be as important as the standards these organisations set for competitive performance. Standards of excellence should extend to personal conduct.

6 Competition and Ethos

A child centred ethos and a balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to children's development while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. Through such competition children learn respect for opponents, officials and the rules of the game.

Too often competitive demands are placed on children too early, which results in excessive levels of pressure on them. This is one of a number of factors, which contribute to high levels of dropout from sport in general. It should always be kept in mind that the welfare of children comes first and competitive standards come second. While Under 8s is a very different age group to Under 15s, the same general principle should apply.

7 Equality

All children should be valued and treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of ability, age, sex, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion. Children, irrespective of ability or disability should be involved in sport activities in an integrated and inclusive way, whenever possible, thus allowing them to participate to their potential alongside other children.

Section two

Players' Code of Conduct

- Play within the Rules.
- Never argue with an Official. Have your captain or coach approach the Official after the game to show appreciation.
- Control your temper. Verbal abuse and sledging opponents, deliberately provoking an opponent are not acceptable or permitted behaviours.
- Work hard for yourself and your team. You and the team will benefit from this attitude.
- Treat all opponents, as you like to be treated.
- Co-operate with your coach and team-mates. Without them there would be no game.
- Participate for your own enjoyment and benefit, not just to please parents or coaches.
- Recognise and appreciate the efforts made by coaches, parents, match officials and administrators in providing the opportunity to play the game and enjoy the sporting environment.
- Recognise that every young player has a right to expect their involvement in sport to be safe and free from all types of abuse.
- If an individual or group of young players feel that they are not being treated in a manner that is acceptable, then they have a right to tell an adult either at the local club or outside of the game.
- Remember skill development, fun and enjoyment are the most important parts of the game.
- Be attentive at all training/coaching sessions.
- Recognise good play by all players on your team and by your opponents.
- Be a sportsman whether you win or lose.
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of all participants regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion.

Parents' Code of Conduct

- Parents should be encouraged to attend coaching sessions and games and making them aware that the "win at all costs" ethos is not accepted in sport.
- Parents should be aware of what is unacceptable behaviour.
 - Do not verbally abuse children be it your own or the other team
 - Do not verbally abuse Officials
 - Do not verbally abuse other spectators

- Do not harass Officials, players or coaches
- Do not show disrespect for your child or teams opponents
- Do not condone violence on or off the field
- Children participate for their enjoyment, not that of their parents.
- Encourage children to participate but do not force them.
- Encourage children to always play according to the rules, and to settle disagreements without having to resort to hostility or violence.
- Never ridicule or yell at a child for making a mistake or losing a game.
- Children learn best by example. Appreciate good performance and skillful play by all players and Officials.
- Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from sport.
- Respect decisions by Officials and teach children to do likewise.
- Show appreciation for volunteer coaches, officials, and administrators. Without them, children could not play sport.
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of all participants regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion.

Coaches' Code of Conduct

- Provide a seasonal diary of the times and dates of training, matches and competitions.
- Provide information on possible financial issues.
- Agree on issues relating to duty of care (e.g. responsibility for travelling to and from games). This may need to be done with parents and administration.
- Encourage parents to attend coaching sessions and games and making them aware that the "win at all costs" ethos is not acceptable.
- Ensuring that parents have realistic aspirations for their child and are aware of his/her strengths and weaknesses.
- Informing parents about specialist equipment that is required (e.g. mouth guards), and from where it can be purchased.
- Ensuring parents are aware of what is unacceptable sideline behaviour. See previous checklist.
- Recognise the importance of fun and enjoyment when coaching young players. Most learning is achieved through "doing."
- Appreciate the needs of the players before the needs of the sport.
- Be a positive role model and understand what this implies.
- Keep winning and losing in perspective whilst encourage young players to behave with dignity in all circumstances.
- Respect all Officials and the decisions they make (remember it could be you refereeing next week) and ensure that the players recognise that they must do the same.
- Provide positive verbal feedback in a constructive and encouraging manner, to all young players both during coaching sessions and games.
- Provide experiences that are matched to the young players' age and ability, as well as their physical and mental development.

- Ensure all children are coached in a safe environment and there is adequate first aid readily available.
- Avoid overplaying the best players by using a squad system, which gives everybody a satisfactory amount of playing time.
- Never allow a player to train or play when injured.
- Ensure good supervision of young players, both on and off the field.
- Recognise that young players should never be exposed to extremes of heat, cold, or unacceptable risk of injury.
- Develop an awareness of nutrition as part of an overall education in lifestyle management.
- Ensure that their knowledge and coaching strategies are up to date and in line with the sport philosophy.
- Be aware of, and abide by, the sport's recommended procedures for taking young people on residential tours at home and abroad.
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of all participants regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion.
- Recognise symptoms of abuse and overt abuse by adults involved in the game and spectators, and do something about it.
- Do not allow abuse of children by children, often known as bullying, but it can be more subtle.

Administrators' Code of Conduct

- Encourage an environment within the club whereby the opportunity to play is offered to all children.
- Encourage the concept of good sporting partnerships between young people, their parents, club coaches and officials.
- Involve young people in the decision-making processes, where appropriate.
- Recognise that the club has a 'duty of care' towards all young club members.
- Ensure that the club provides responsible supervision for all young people.
- Promote the concepts of fair play, respect and enjoyment. Discourage the 'win at all costs' ethic amongst the local sport community.
- Provide coaches with the opportunity to achieve coaching qualifications.
- Ensure that equipment and facilities are available for and appropriate to the requirements of the coaches and needs of the young players.
- Ensure that the club coaching/playing programme does not expose Age Group players to the possibility of overplaying.
- Ensure matches are officiated by suitable and accredited referees.
- Ensure that appropriate medical and first aid provision is always available.
- Promote links with the local community, particularly schools.
- Give a Code of Conduct sheet to spectators, officials, parents, coaches, players and the media. Encourage them to adhere to it.
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of all participants regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion.
- Have a child protection policy and procedures in place to minimise the potential for abuse.

Officials' Code of Conduct

- Recognise the importance of fun and enjoyment when officiating young players.
- Provide positive verbal feedback in a constructive and encouraging manner during games.
- Emphasise the spirit of the game.
- Appreciate the needs of the children before the needs of the sport.
- Understand the physical, social and psychological development of Age Group players.
- Be a positive role model. You set an example and, as such, comments you receive should be positive and supportive.
- Recognise that the safety of young players is paramount.
- Explain decisions as all Age Group players are still learning.
- Play advantage whenever possible in order to let the game flow.
- Show empathy for the age and ability of Age Group players.
- Be consistent and objective.
- Ensure that verbal abuse from players, coaches or spectators is not tolerated and is dealt with by club officials immediately.
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of all participants regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion.
- Learn the context of development of sport skills at different age groups and officiate accordingly.

Spectators' Code of Conduct

- Act as positive role models to all young players.
- Respect the club policy with regard to spectator behaviour.
- Remember children play sport for their enjoyment not yours.
- Acknowledge good individual and team performance from all Age Group players irrespective of which team they play for.
- Respect match Official's decisions. Remember, they are volunteers providing an opportunity for youngsters to play.
- Never verbally abuse young players, match Officials, fellow spectators or coaches. Such behaviour can create a negative environment for Age Group players and their behaviour will often reflect this.
- Spectators should be aware of what is unacceptable sideline behaviour.
 - Do not verbally abuse children
 - Do not verbally abuse Officials
 - Do not verbally abuse other spectators
 - Do not harass Officials, players or coaches
 - Do not show disrespect for your teams opponents
 - Do not condone violence on or off the field
- Acknowledge effort and good performance rather than the "win at all costs" ethic.
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of all participants regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion.

Section three

Child Protection: A Guide

This document is intended as a guide for people involved in the coaching, management and development of sport within the club environment. It should be read by volunteers, parents and professionals alike, and in particular, all coaches. In it, you are introduced to the concept of child abuse in sport, in all its forms and are given ways of both recognising warning signs and acting on concerns.

Abuse is a powerful and emotive term. Child abuse is a term used to describe ways in which children are harmed, usually by adults and often by those they know and trust. The coach often holds this trust and may be at risk of misusing their power over Age Group players.

It is widely recognised that there are four main areas of abuse which coaches and volunteers should be aware of:

Emotional abuse: In general terms, emotional abuse occurs when adults persistently fail to show children due care, love or affection, where a child may be constantly shouted at, or threatened or subjected to sarcasm and unrealistic pressures.

Neglect: In general terms, neglect as a form of abuse occurs when a child's essential needs for food, warmth and care fail to be met.

Physical abuse: In general terms, this occurs when adults or even children, deliberately inflict injuries on a child, or knowingly do not prevent such injuries. It also occurs when an adult gives children alcohol, or inappropriate drugs, or fails to supervise their access to these substances.

Sexual abuse: In general terms, girls and boys are abused by adults, both male and female, who use children to meet their own sexual needs.

There may, however, be an increased risk within many sports for abuse to occur which does not necessarily fit into these categories. The unique culture and traditions of some sports, along with so-called stereotypical behaviour, (although common to many team sports), may give rise to unacceptable behaviour leading to situations where abuse may occur or coaches and/or young players are at increased risk.

Safeguarding the welfare of our young players is paramount. As coaches and volunteers we have a moral and possibly a legal responsibility to provide the highest possible standard of care when we welcome young people into sport.

Whilst there are many ways in which the welfare of young players can be safeguarded, this document does not go into detail and further guidance can be sought through your National or Provincial Sport Organization.

You are advised to become familiar with ways in which you and your club can:

- Understand what child abuse means
- Ensure good practice in the coaching of young players
- Provide a safe environment for young people
- Recognise abuse and provide a structure to deal sympathetically with concerns.

This document was adapted from a publication of the International Rugby Board and the North America West Indies Rugby Association.