



GUIDANCE NOTES NO:

5.7

**ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS WHEN
WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE
GUIDANCE: FOR GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL**

FOR ALL

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The following guidance documents has been produced for long-term use and is not tailored to the changeable restrictions in place as a result of the current COVID-19 pandemic. For example, references are made to appropriate forms of physical contact most of which, under current government guidelines, are prohibited. Accordingly, during this time, clubs should also refer to current government guidance and The FA guidance on return to grassroots football and construe the below documents in light of that guidance. You can find out more [here](#).

Working with young people in grassroots football requires individuals to exhibit certain additional behaviours to those required when working with adults. We have therefore developed this guidance to assist clubs and those involved in grassroots football in understanding the behaviours that they are expected to exhibit. We expect clubs to ensure that all participants are aware of this guidance.

We have listed below examples of positive behaviours that are expected within grassroots football. This is not an exhaustive list, but we would encourage all clubs to ensure that any individuals involved in its football activity are aware of the types of positive behaviours that are expected from them.

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS - ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE

- Clubs are expected to be welcoming to all children and parents/carers.
- Children are treated equally, with respect and dignity.
- Football is safe, fun and inclusive.
- The FA's Respect principles are being implemented and adhered to within clubs.
- Club officials are expected to be friendly, professional and positive role models. For example, they should not

be smoking/vaping or drinking alcohol when coaching and or working with children or engaging in other behaviour that would be considered inappropriate.

- There is a positive environment where healthy competition, skill development, fun and achievement are promoted in equal measure.
- The needs and abilities of children are expected to be recognised and over-training and/or competition should be avoided.
- Good sporting behaviour should be promoted, by encouraging children to be considerate of their teammates, the opposition (including their officials), the match officials and by being modest when winning and gracious in defeat.

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS - CHILDREN'S NEEDS

- Giving positive and constructive feedback to children and avoiding negative criticism.
- Always putting the wellbeing of children first.
- Ensuring a child centred approach to coaching and planning sessions around the group as a whole, whilst meeting any additional needs and abilities of individuals.

- Finding out if any children being coached have medical conditions or impairments and having an appropriate plan in place to support this.
- Encouraging children to review their own progress based on their skill development, knowledge of the game and enjoyment, as opposed to winning or losing.
- Being prepared to raise concerns about a child to the Club Welfare Officer if they are displaying behaviour not usual to them or which causes concern.

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ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS – APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES

- Always working in an open environment and avoiding being alone with a child.
- Adult-child relationships should be supportive and positive and aimed at improving the young person's skills, development and progress, with clear boundaries maintained. The adult-child relationship must focus on the respective activity/event.
- No intimate or sexual relationship taking place with any 16-17 year olds. Please refer to - <http://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/section-1-footballs-safeguarding-framework> (See Guidance Notes 1.7: Abuse of Trust).
- Establishing appropriate relationships based on trust which enable children to take part in the club's decision-making process. This needs to include regularly asking children if they have enjoyed training session activities and adapting these to meet their suggestions.
- All electronic or online communications must be via a child's parents/carers.
- Any gifts given to a child by a club official must be formalised by the club

(including, as a minimum, recognising the purpose of the gift) and have parent/ carer agreement.

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS – PHYSICAL CONTACT

- Following The FA's physical contact guidelines, where children are always consulted, and their agreement gained before any physical contact is made, please refer to Guidance Notes 5.6: 'Physical contact and young people: Guidance for grassroots football', which are available [here](#).

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS – ACTIVITY AWAY FROM THE CLUB

- Ensuring accompanying adults are suitably safeguarding trained and hold in-date DBS Checks in line with FA policy, please refer to <http://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/section-3-safer-recruitment-and-dbs-checks> (See Guidance Notes 3.5: Eligibility of roles).
- Ensuring at least one accompanying adult is the same gender as the group.
- If mixed gender teams are taken away from the club environment, ensuring they are always accompanied by both a male and female adult.

- Not entering a child's room or inviting them into an adult's room – except in an emergency, i.e. when very unwell and only when another accompanying adult is present.
- Keeping a written record if a child is injured in an adult's care, including details of any treatment provided and ensuring parents/carers are informed as necessary.

The following is a list of example behaviours that must not be tolerated in grassroots football. Again, as noted above, this is not an exhaustive list, but we would encourage all clubs to ensure that any individuals involved in its football activity are aware of the types of behaviours that will not be tolerated:

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS – ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE

- Sharing a room with a child, unless they are the adult's own child.
- Allowing children or adults to use inappropriate language or 'bully' others.
- Working alone with a child or groups of children – please refer to <http://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/section-5-the-designated-safeguarding-officer-network> (See Guidance Notes 5.5: Ratios of adults to children).

- Encouraging or permitting 'hazing' practices amongst children or adults, including the use of any form of initiation ceremony.
- Using film footage of a child's behaviour or mistake (e.g. at a match) to humiliate them, embarrass them, or otherwise make them feel uncomfortable.

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UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS - CHILDREN'S NEEDS

- Allowing behaviour that frightens, embarrasses or demoralises a child or otherwise affects their self-esteem.
- Making a child cry as a form of control.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS - INAPPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Taking children, that are not direct family members, to an adult's home.
- Making sexually suggestive comments or gestures to a child.
- Swearing at or making aggressive comments or gestures towards a child.
- Having direct digital communication with a single child – for example, by text or social media.
- Transporting a child by car, where they will be alone with only one adult (unless in exceptional circumstances e.g. illness, injury or accident).
- Using digital communications for personal conversation with a child, or sending pictures, jokes or other items of a personal nature to a child;

- Making inappropriate comments about a child's body type.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS - PHYSICAL CONTACT

- Allowing physical acts of aggression.
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games.
- Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate touching or physical abuse.
- Allowing allegations or comments made by a child regarding physical contact or other inappropriate behaviour to be disregarded or go unrecorded.
- Providing unnecessary personal care or assistance for a child, e.g. when they can do it for themselves.
- Adults showering with children.

For best practice when working with adults in disability football, please refer to The FA.com Safeguarding Section 10 [here](#).



The FA wishes to acknowledge that it has incorporated guidance provided by the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit in developing this safer working practice. It is important to note this guidance is not an exhaustive list of acceptable or unacceptable behaviours, nor is it intended to replace or supersede any guidance from the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit.



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