



GUIDANCE NOTES NO:

5.8

MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR IN YOUNG PEOPLE: GUIDANCE AND TEMPLATE FOR GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL

FOR ALL

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FOR ALL

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

The following guidance document 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](#).

Anyone involved in providing or putting on football activities for children may at some point need to deal with a child's challenging behaviour. We have therefore developed this guidance to assist clubs and those involved in grassroots football in managing challenging behaviour in children.

We have also produced a template (see Appendix 1) for clubs' commitment and procedures that incorporates this guidance and can be used by grassroots football clubs to help communicate their principles and practices to club officials.

This guidance is based on the following principles and aims to provide, support, and promote safer practice:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- Children must never be subject to any form of treatment that is harmful, abusive, humiliating or degrading.
- A child's specific needs should be discussed with their parent/carer and, where appropriate, the child before activities start. Where appropriate, details of any plan or approach agreed between the coach, parents/carers, the child, and

the Club Welfare Officer should be recorded and provided to all parties.

- Every child should be supported to participate in football. Excluding a child from football activity as a result of their behaviour should only be used in exceptional circumstances and as a last resort after all efforts to address any challenge have been exhausted; for example, where a child's challenging behaviour means that the safety of that child or of other children cannot be maintained, the club or football organisation may consider it appropriate to exclude that child.

- Parents/carers must be kept informed of incidents of challenging behaviour as soon as is reasonably possible.

WHAT IS CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR?

Challenging behaviour has been defined as behaviour that is "of such an intensity, frequency, or duration as to threaten the quality of life and/or the physical safety of the individual or others and it is likely to lead to responses that are restrictive, aversive or result in exclusion"¹.



¹Source: Royal College of Psychiatrists, British Psychological Society, Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, (2007), Challenging behaviour – a unified approach

PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Always consider if any child needs, or may need, additional support or supervision to participate safely, as a result of their behaviour. To do this effectively ensure your club follows these four key steps:

- 1. An assessment of any additional risk** associated with a child's potential behaviour.
- 2. Identification of suitable ratios of adults to children** to meet any additional needs. There may need to be greater adult supervision depending on the outcome of the assessment at point 1 above.
- 3. Give guidance to all supervising adults** on how to manage challenging behaviour to ensure a consistent approach.
- 4. Consider using specialist expertise or support** that may be needed from carers or outside agencies. This is particularly relevant where it is identified that a child may need a level of physical intervention to participate safely (see page 4).

AGREEING ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

Club officials and those leading the football activity are required to work with the participating children and their parents/carers to agree:

- What constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (i.e. a code of conduct); and
- The range of sanctions which may be applied in response to unacceptable behaviour.

This can be done at the start of the season, in advance of a trip away or as part of a welcome session at a residential camp. It should involve the views of children to encourage buy-in and understanding.

Where challenges are anticipated, for example as a result of a child's impairment or other medical condition, a clear plan needs to be made and written down.

Clubs should ensure that parents/carers understand the expectations on their children and ask them to reinforce this ahead of any trip or activity.

The FA's Respect campaign 'We only do positive' has been developed in consultation with club officials, children and parents/carers. This is a good place to start the above process and provides access to the Respect codes of conduct, advice and guidance. You can find out more [here](#). However, it is ultimately the club's responsibility to make sure everyone involved in its football activity is clear about what is acceptable, what is not and the possible actions that may be taken.

MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

When responding to challenging behaviour, the response must always be:

- Proportionate to the challenging behaviour or actions;
- Imposed as soon as is practicable; and
- Fully explained to the child and their parents/carers.

When dealing with children who display negative or challenging behaviours, the nature of the behaviour and the age of the child must be considered when determining the action(s) to take.

Consider making use of the following actions:

- Continue to praise appropriate behaviour of those positively completing the task/activity.
- Offer extra responsibility to a child to help refocus their energy e.g. leading a part of the activity.
- Increase the number of coaches/staff/volunteers involved in overseeing the task/activity.
- Reason with the child, including advising them about the consequences of their actions.
- De-escalate the situation, for example by talking with the child and distracting them from challenging behaviour.
- Use a verbal reprimand (including advice on how to improve).
- Implement a time out from the current activity.
- Implement a temporary removal from subsequent training session.

- Not selecting the child for the next match starting line-up but placed on the bench for substitution (alongside an explanation as to why the child has not been selected).
- Not selecting the child to play any part in the next match (alongside an explanation as to why the child has not been selected).
- Not selecting the child to play any part in the next two/three matches (alongside an explanation as to why the child has not been selected).
- Require completion of another a task or activity to make amends.
- Use individual agreements with the child (and/or their parents/carers) to determine the basis upon which the child will be permitted to continue participating.
- Seek additional/specialist support through working in partnership with other agencies.

THE FOLLOWING SHOULD NEVER BE PERMITTED AS A MEANS OF MANAGING A CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR:

- Physical punishment or the threat of such.
- Refusal to speak to or interact with the child.
- Depriving the child of food, water, access to changing facilities or toilets or other essential facilities.
- Verbal intimidation, ridicule or humiliation.

PHYSICAL INTERVENTION

Club officials, those leading football activity and volunteers must consider the risks associated with employing physical intervention compared with the risks of not doing so.

The use of physical intervention must always:

- Be avoided unless it is absolutely necessary to prevent a child injuring themselves or others or causing serious damage to property.
- Be aimed at achieving an outcome that is in the best interests of the child whose behaviour is of immediate concern.
- Form part of a broader approach to the management of challenging behaviour.
- Be the result of conscious decision-making and not a reaction to an adult's frustration.
- Employ the minimum force needed to avoid injury to a person or serious damage to property and applied for the shortest period of time.
- Used only after all other strategies have been exhausted.
- Be recorded as soon as possible using the appropriate club reporting form and procedure.

Parents should always be informed following an incident where a club official, or someone leading football activity or volunteer has had to physically intervene with a child.

Physical intervention **must not**:

- Involve contact with the head, neck, buttocks, genitals or breasts.
- Be used as a form of punishment.
- Involve inflicting pain.

VIEWS OF THE CHILD

A timely de-brief for staff/volunteers, the child and parents/carers should always take place in a calm environment following an incident where physical intervention has been used.

Even children who haven't directly been involved in the situation may need to talk about what they have witnessed.

There should also be a discussion with the child and their parents about the child's needs and continued safe participation in the group or activity.

PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

All grassroots football clubs that work with children are advised to implement procedures on managing challenging behaviour that include, at a minimum, the following:

- **The standard of conduct expected by staff/volunteers and participants** (you may wish to use The FA's Respect codes of conduct).
- **How the club will respond to unacceptable behaviours.**

- **How the club will respond to 'high-risk' behaviours.**
- **The circumstances in which physical interventions will be used.**
- **Guidance, support and/or training available to staff/volunteers.**
- **The circumstances where external agencies will be contacted for support or in response to concerns** e.g. Children's Social Care services, the Police.
- **What will happen after an incident with regards to a debrief.**

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. This guidance is not intended to replace or supersede any guidance from the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit. We expect clubs to ensure that all participants are aware of this guidance.



APPENDIX 1

CLUB TEMPLATE FOR GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL

MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR IN YOUNG PEOPLE

The following club template 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](#).

This template allows you to add your club name to the relevant sections. It is important that the principles and procedures are discussed, understood and accepted by the committee. The committee will then be responsible for ensuring the club officials and wider members are aware of the club's commitment to these procedures to manage challenging behaviour of young people.

**PLEASE DOWNLOAD GUIDANCE NOTES 5.8A
FOR A FULLY-EDITABLE WORD VERSION OF THE
TEMPLATE WHICH STARTS OVERLEAF.**



MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR IN YOUNG PEOPLE

Football Club commitment and procedures

OUR COMMITMENT

Our football club is based on mutual respect, support and encouragement to bring out the best in everyone. We aim to promote positive standards of behaviour which are easily understood and require all our members (players, parents/carers and club officials) to sign up to these behaviours.

Our club officials have a critical role in establishing high standards of coaching, learning and behaviour. Positive behaviour and self-control are key to creating a happy and effective club environment. Poor behaviour cannot be tolerated because it prevents individual and collective learning, enjoyment, team development and morale. The support of parents/carers is essential in managing and maintaining acceptable behaviour by the club's young participants.

Through our procedures, and on welcoming new members to our club, we will:

- Make clear what is considered acceptable practice;
- Communicate the required standards of behaviour; and
- Share the club's process for responding to behaviour that is considered unacceptable.

It is the responsibility of all football club officials to ensure that they read and understand this policy and put our procedures into practice. If there are any questions or queries, please contact our Club Welfare Officer (CWO) or other committee member for guidance.

Parents of under-18 players will all be provided with information about what we expect as a club and our codes of conduct, as well as information on who they should contact should they have concerns.

OUR PRINCIPLES

Anyone working with children may need to deal with a child's challenging behaviour. Our procedures aim to provide support and promote safer practice and are based on these six principles:

1. **The welfare of the child is paramount.**
2. **Children must never be subject to any form of treatment that is harmful, abusive, humiliating or degrading.**
3. **A child's specific needs should be discussed with their parent/carer and, where appropriate, the child before activities start. Where appropriate, details of any plan or approach agreed between the coach, parents/carers, the child and the CWO will be recorded and provided to all parties.**
4. **Every child should be supported to participate. Excluding a child from football activity as a result of their behaviour should only be used in exceptional circumstances and as a last resort, e.g. where the safety of a child or of other children cannot be maintained, or parent/carer engagement has been exhausted.**

5. **Children should be encouraged to manage their own behaviour where possible.**
6. **Unacceptable behaviour from parents/carers should not be tolerated.**

Our managing unacceptable behaviour procedures must be used alongside our anti-bullying procedures and safeguarding children policy.

ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Some children may exhibit challenging behaviour as a result of a medical or psychological condition. When children are identified as having additional needs or behaviours that are likely to require additional supervision, specialist expertise or support, this should be discussed with their parents/carers and, where appropriate, the child to ensure that an appropriate approach is agreed.

Additional support and advice can be requested from our CWO, who in turn may seek advice from our County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer and/or external agencies.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Good coaching requires planned sessions for the group that also consider individual player needs. Where club officials identify potential risks, strategies to manage those risks should be agreed in advance of the activity.

When assessing the number of adults required to safely manage and support an activity, consideration should be given to the ability to respond effectively to any challenging behaviour whilst ensuring other players and club officials are safeguarded. As a club we will aim to work in partnership with parents/carers and, where necessary, external agencies to ensure, wherever possible, that a child or young person can be supported to participate safely.

AGREEING ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS²

By joining our club, club officials, members, players, and parents/carers of under-18 players agree to adhere to our codes of conduct. A range of actions can be used to respond to unacceptable behaviour which we have outlined later in this document.

²As detailed within – [Acceptable behaviours when working with young people: Guidance for grassroots football](#)

RESPONDING TO UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

The type of behaviour and age of the child will determine the actions used, but we encourage the following to be considered:

- Continuing to praise appropriate behaviour of those positively completing the task/activity;
- Offering extra responsibility to a child to help refocus their energy e.g. leading a part of the activity;
- Increasing the number of coaches/staff/volunteers involved in overseeing the task/activity;
- Reasoning with the child, including advising them about the consequences of their actions;
- De-escalating the situation, for example by talking with the child and distracting them from challenging behaviour;
- Using a verbal reprimand (including advice on how to improve);
- Implementing a time out from the current activity;
- Implementing a temporary exclusion from the next task/activity;
- Not selecting the child to play in the next starting line-up but placed on the bench for substitution, alongside explaining to the child why they have not been selected;
- Not selecting the child to play any part in the next match, alongside explaining to the child why they have not been selected;
- Not considering the child to play any part in the next 2/3 matches, alongside explaining to the child why they will not be taking part;
- Requiring completion of another task or activity to make amends;
- Using individual agreements with the child and their parents/carers, for the child's future or continued participation;
- As a last resort, if a child continues to present a high level of risk or danger to themselves, or others, considering suspension or barring the child from the team and/or club activities;
- Seeking additional/specialist support through working in partnership with other agencies (e.g. the child's school, Children's Social Care);
- In some circumstances, referring the matter to our County FA.

MISCONDUCT DURING MATCHES

Misconduct during matches may result in County FA disciplinary action. If this occurs, our committee will be informed who will liaise with the County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer regarding support at disciplinary hearings to ensure the welfare of the child in line with **The FA's 'Personal Hearings Guidance'** – See *FA Guidance Notes 7.3: Personal hearings' guidance for under 18s.*

If parents/carers or club officials encourage and/or pressurise children to behave unacceptably during matches, the club will take the appropriate actions to deal with the adults and, where appropriate, the children concerned.

The following should never be used to manage a child's behaviour:

- Physical punishment or the threat of such.
- Refusal to speak to or interact with the child.
- Being deprived of food, water, access to changing facilities or toilets or other essential facilities.
- Verbal intimidation, ridicule or humiliation.

PHYSICAL INTERVENTION

Physical intervention should be avoided unless necessary to prevent (i) a child injuring themselves or others, (ii) causing serious damage to property, or (iii) when working with children with an impairment that necessitates such intervention. It is important that club officials understand this to protect the child, their own position and the reputation of our club. Physical contact to prevent something happening should always be the result of conscious decision-making and not a reaction.

The decision to restrain a child should be firmly based on the safety of the child and must never be made as a punishment or to get children to comply with instructions.

If physical intervention is necessary:

- Ensure it is aimed at achieving an outcome in the best interests of the child whose behaviour is of immediate concern;
- Consider your own safety and that of the child(ren);
- Give verbal instructions first;
- Use the minimum reasonable force, for the shortest time possible, to resolve the incident;
- Do not strike a child, pin a child down, act with unnecessary force, or retaliate;
- Avoid contact with intimate parts of the body, the head and neck;
- Do not cover a child's mouth;
- Stay in control of your actions; and
- Consider swapping club officials during the intervention to reduce the tension and stress.

Any physical intervention should be recorded as soon as possible after the incident by the club officials involved. This must be passed to the CWO as soon as possible and the parent/carer informed.

RESPONDING TO HIGH RISK BEHAVIOURS

Where children are identified as having additional needs or behaviours that are likely to require physical intervention, this must be discussed with parents/carers and, where necessary, the club will seek advice from, or work in partnership with, external agencies (e.g. Children's Social Care) to ensure that the child or young person can be supported to participate safely. This may include asking for the provision of a suitably trained support worker/volunteer or accessing staff/volunteer training in physical intervention or parent/carer support.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Issues of behaviour and management of unacceptable behaviour will be discussed with club officials, parents, carers and children in the context of rights and responsibilities so that all parties understand what is expected of them and others. This will be done at the start of the season, in advance of a trip away, when going on tour, or at other intervals as deemed appropriate. We will ensure every under-18 player has a copy of **The FA's guidance 'Know your rights in football'**.

SIGNED BY:

.....
Club Chairperson/Secretary

DATE: / /

CODES OF CONDUCT

Our coaches are provided with our codes of conduct to use with under-18 players. However, we recognise that when children are consulted as a group, and specifically asked to draw up rules for their team, they generate very sensible ideas and tend to take greater ownership of those rules as opposed to those provided by the club. We therefore encourage our coaches to discuss with their under-18 players how they wish to make use of our code of conduct and collectively agree on the team's code of conduct.

RECOGNISING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR – GIVING PRAISE

..... football club fully recognises the importance of praise to reinforce positive behaviours and encourages the use of any one, or combination of, the following actions:

- A quiet word or gesture to show approval;
- A word of praise in front of the group;
- Verbal acknowledgement from the club's senior coach or programme lead;

- A reward system – player of the week/month/season;
- Special mention at club/football programme end of season awards;
- Delegating some special responsibility or privilege e.g. choice of playing position that week/being captain/choosing the practice content;
- A mention to parents – either written or verbal communication; and/or
- An invitation to train with another age group (appropriate to skill/physical abilities and with the consent of the parent/carer).

SIGNED BY:

.....
Club Welfare Officer

DATE: / /

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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