

Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy for Scottish Football – Referee Associations

MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS

This Practice Note applies to all members and sets out the best practice in relation to responding to challenging behaviour and physical contact. The principles set out in this Practice Note will also apply to children and young people who Association members come into contact with through their role in football and any concerns must be reported to the Referee Association's Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer.

Football should be an enjoyable activity which allows everyone to take part in a fun and safe manner. At times this will involve managing behaviours in an appropriate way and responding to challenging behaviour in a safe and thought out manner. This Practice Note aims to promote best practice that can help support young people to manage their own behaviour. It also identifies unacceptable actions or interventions which must *never* be used by members.

These guidelines are based on the following principles:





- **The wellbeing of the child or young person is the paramount consideration**
- **Children and young people must never be subjected to any form of treatment that is harmful, abusive, humiliating or degrading and should always be able to maintain their dignity and respect**
- **No member of the Referee Association should attempt to respond to behaviour by using techniques for which they have not been trained**
- **For Referee Association events or activities, a risk assessment should be completed as part of the planning of the event or activity and take into consideration the needs of the young people who will be involved in the event/activity. For further information see [Practice Note – Prevention Planning](#)**

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Managing Behaviour

It is important to create the right environment and model the behaviour that you expect from young people involved in football.

Creating the right environment involves but is not limited to:

- **Strong leadership** - promoting positive relationships at all levels and a culture and ethos of positive and respectful relationships. Members should embody the behaviour expected from children and young people 
- **Constructive communication** – communication between the adults and young people involved at the Referee Association includes listening to the young person without trying to solve the problem and recognising how the child or young person is feeling 
- **Behavioural reinforcement** - rewards for good behaviour and consequences for negative behaviour 
- All those delivering activities to children and/or young people should receive **appropriate training** and should be supported to address issues of behaviour through **support** from the Referee Association 

For young people involved at the Referee Association, any displays of challenging behaviour should be responded to through a conversation with the young person. It is important to ascertain the reason for the behaviour and support the young person to identify their own behaviour and be given an opportunity to improve. Only in circumstances where the risk is too great towards the young person or others should the young person be asked to sit out of the activity. Should there be no change in behaviour, the Referee Association will review the involvement of the young person in the Referee

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Association to ensure an informed decision is made about the young person's future or continued participation at the Association. Whilst it would always be against the wishes of everyone involved in the Referee Association, ultimately, if a young person presents a high level of risk or danger to themselves, or others, they may not be able to continue participating.

From time to time, members working with children and young people through their role as a referee, may be required to deal with a child or young person's behaviour, which they find challenging. It is essential that any response by a referee to challenging behaviour is done in a thought out manner and ensures that safety and wellbeing of the child or young person involved.

Physical Contact

Members of the Association must never:

- initiate unnecessary physical contact with their participants
- engage in 'rough' physical contact
- engage in sexually provocative games e.g. horseplay or touching a child or young person in a sexually suggestive manner



Physical interventions

The use of physical interventions should always be avoided unless it is absolutely necessary in order to prevent a child or young person injuring themselves, injuring others or causing serious damage to property. All forms of physical intervention shall form part of a broader approach to the management of behaviour.

Physical contact to prevent something happening should always be the result of conscious decision-making and not a reaction. Before physically intervening members should ask themselves, "Is this the only option in order to manage the situation and ensure safety?" Referees should use all other techniques, including blowing the whistle, giving warnings etc. and only use physical interventions as a last resort if it is necessary to ensure the safety of children and young people involved in the game.

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The following must always be considered:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact should always be avoided with the buttocks, genitals and breasts• Members should never behave in a way which could be interpreted as sexual• Any form of physical intervention should achieve an outcome that is in the best interests of the child or young person whose behaviour is of immediate concern and achieve a better outcome for the child or young person than if no physical intervention is used• Members should consider the circumstances and the risks associated with employing physical intervention compared with the risks of not employing physical intervention• Members shall never use physical intervention as a form of punishment | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The scale and nature of physical intervention must always be proportionate to the behaviour of the child or young person and the nature of harm/damage they might cause• All forms of physical intervention should employ only a reasonable amount of force - the minimum force needed to avert injury to a person or serious damage to property – applied for the shortest period of time• Members should never employ physical interventions which are deemed to present an unreasonable risk to children or young people e.g. risk of injury• Members shall never use a form of physical intervention for which they have not been trained |
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Use of physical intervention should be recorded as soon as possible after the incident by the member and reported to the League/Association and to the Referee Association Manager. This can be done by the reporting mechanism for that League. Depending on the nature of the intervention consideration should also be given as to whether the Referee Association's Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer should also be notified.

A timely debrief should always take place following an incident where physical intervention has been used. This should include ensuring that the physical and emotional wellbeing of those involved has been addressed and ongoing support offered where necessary.