

BEHAVIOUR



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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 children and young people manage their own behaviour. It also identifies unacceptable actions or interventions which must never be used by members of staff or Associated Persons.

THESE GUIDELINES ARE BASED ON THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

- The wellbeing of the child or young person is the paramount consideration
- A risk assessment, by means of planning and preparing for each session, should be completed for all activities taking into consideration the needs of all children or young people involved in the activity. For further information see [Practice Note — Prevention Planning](#)
- 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 staff or Associated Person should attempt to respond to behaviour by using techniques for which they have not been trained

MANAGING BEHAVIOUR

It is important to create the right environment and model the behaviour that you expect from children and 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 of staff and Associated Persons should embody the behaviour expected from the children and young people



- **Constructive communication** — communication between the adults and children or young people includes listening to the child or young person without interruption, or 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 **regular** conversations with their manager and/or **support** from the Wellbeing and Protection Department

From time to time members of staff and Associated Persons working or volunteering with children and/or young people may be required to deal with a child or young person's behaviour that they find challenging. Managing this behaviour will involve advance planning of activities, responding in an appropriate way to the challenging behaviour and reflecting on how practice can be improved.



PREPARATION AND PLANNING

AGREEING ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

Members of staff, Associated Persons, children/young people and their parents/carers should be involved in developing an agreed statement of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This is commonly known as a 'Code of Conduct'. All members of staff and Associated Persons working or volunteering with children and young people will be expected to sign the Scottish FA's *Set the Standards — Behaviours, Expectations and Requirements* and uphold the *Wellbeing and Protection Values — Inclusive, Approachable, Empowering and Accountable*.



INCLUSIVE

Football is for everyone, irrespective of background. We celebrate what makes us unique and embrace our differences. We create a culture where rights are respected and everyone is treated fairly, with dignity and respect.



APPROACHABLE

We are visible, accessible, open and caring. We build respectful and supportive relationships, listening to children's voices, and championing their views in everything we do.



EMPOWERING

We are forward facing and strive to be the best for children and young people. We are brave, challenging ourselves and others to continually strive for the best outcomes for children and young people. We encourage and support children and young people to express their views.



ACCOUNTABLE

We accept responsibility and take ownership of the wellbeing and protection of children in our game. Our collective leadership calls upon integrity, consistency and confidence in our everyday behaviours.

The children and young people involved in Scottish FA activities should also be encouraged to develop their own Code of Conduct. This will primarily involve children and young people who are playing football and can be done at the start of the season, in advance of a trip away from home or as part of a welcome session.

HOW DO WE HELP CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COME UP WITH A CODE OF CONDUCT?

- Ask the children and/or young people as a group to set out what behaviour they find acceptable and unacceptable within their group or team
- Ask them what the consequences of breaking the 'agreement' should be. Experience shows that they will tend to come up with a sensible and working 'agreement'
- If and when such a list is compiled every member of the group will be asked to sign it, as can new members as they join
- If possible, have a copy of the 'agreement' visible for reference during the activity e.g. in the team's changing room



PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Good practice requires planning sessions around the group as a whole, but also involves taking into consideration the needs of each individual child or young person within that group. Planning sessions involves 'risk assessing' the sessions and those taking the session or activity should consider whether any members of the group have presented challenges in the past, or are likely to present any difficulties in relation to the tasks involved, the other participants or the environment.

WHEN PLANNING A SESSION, ACTIVITY OR EVENT MEMBERS OF STAFF AND ASSOCIATED PERSONS SHOULD:



- Identify the appropriate number of adults required to safely manage and support the session, increased supervision may be necessary for particular activities or events
- Be able to adequately respond to any behaviour and safeguard other members of the group, including other members of staff and/or Associated Persons
- Where members of staff and/or Associated Persons identify any potential risks, strategies to manage those risks should be agreed in advance of the session, event or activity
- If it is identified that a child or young person is likely to display challenging behaviour:
 - Speak to their parents/carers before the session or at the start of the season to identify techniques used within the home setting to support the child or young person and manage difficult behaviour, if appropriate
 - If appropriate, seek advice from professionals if the child or young person has particular needs. This should always been done with the support and agreement of the child/young person and their parents/carers
 - Only in circumstances where the risk is too great towards the child or young person or others should the child or young person be asked to sit out of the activity



MANAGING BEHAVIOUR DURING THE ACTIVITY

It is essential that responding to difficult behaviour is always done in a thought out and calm manner.

RESPONDING TO A CHILD WHO IS DISPLAYING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to the child or young person and use their name • Ask the child or young person 'what's happened?' to help calm the situation and give them an opportunity to reflect on why they are behaving this way • Tell them that you want to hear what they have to say e.g. say to them "Help me to understand what you are saying to me?" • Give them a way out or offer 'time out' e.g. "would you like to take a break?" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise the emotions and feelings that the child or young person has by naming them e.g. "I can see that you are feeling frustrated" • Separate the behaviour from the person • If there is going to be a consequence for their behaviour, explain to them what the consequence will be and what the behaviour was that has led to this consequences |
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CONSEQUENCES FOR RISK-TAKING OR UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time out — from the activity, group or individual work • Payback — the act of giving something back • Missing an activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making up — the act or process of making amends • Use of individual 'contracts' or agreements for their future or continued participation |
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UNACCEPTABLE CONDUCT TO MANAGE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOUR:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical punishment or the threat of such • Invading the child or young person's personal space • Shouting, threatening, preaching or arguing • Verbal intimidation, ridicule or humiliation • Telling the child or young person to "calm down" • Pointing or shaking your finger • Trying to 'win' or have the last word • Interrupting e.g. "no, you listen to what I'm saying for a change..." • The withdrawal of communication with the child or young person | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking it personally • Dismissing their feelings • The child or young person being deprived of food, water or access to changing facilities or toilets • The threat that the child or young person will be 'dropped' from the team or not selected to play in the next game. Unless they present a risk of serious harm to themselves or others involved in the game and in these circumstances the reasons for this decision should be explained to the child or young person and their parents/carers |
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AFTER EACH ACTIVITY

- Reflect on practice — what worked well, what did not work?
- Issues of behaviour and control should regularly be discussed with members of staff, Associated Persons, the child or young person and their parents/carers in the context of rights and responsibilities

Members of staff and Associated Persons should review the needs of any child or young person on whom consequences are frequently imposed. This review should involve the child or young person and their parents or carers to ensure an informed decision is made about the child/young person's future or continued participation in the group or team. Whilst it would always be against the wishes of everyone involved in the Scottish FA ultimately, if a child or young person presents a high level of risk or danger to themselves, or others, they may not be able to continue participating. This assessment could result from a single incident.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

There are a range of situations where members of staff and/or Associated Persons may come into physical contact with the children and/or young people. For example, to prevent or treat an injury, a child who is upset reaching out for comfort, congratulating a player who has done well, to position the player for a drill etc.

THE GENERAL GUIDANCE IS AS FOLLOWS:

- All forms of physical contact should be respectful and be sensitive to the needs and wishes of the child or young person and take place in a culture of dignity and respect
- Children and young people should be encouraged to express their views on physical contact
- Physical contact should be in a reasonable and appropriate manner in an open environment with other adults present, where possible
- Be mindful that to comfort a child or young person who is upset, it is not always necessary or appropriate to place an arm around them. Sitting down and listening to them and maybe holding their hand can show concern for their situation
- Sometimes children or young people will initiate a hug or other forms of excited/happy contact with coaches and other adults, this is a normal form of human expression. It is important that adults respond to this in an appropriate manner, where they engage with the child or young person in a positive way while not prolonging the contact or imitating it. Respond and then re-direct them into a more suitable coach/player form of positive expression such as a high 5 or dropping to one knee to speak to them at eye level

MEMBERS OF STAFF AND ASSOCIATED PERSONS 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



SUPPORTING A CHILD WITH PERSONAL CARE

Some members of staff and/or Associated Persons may be working with younger children or young people with particular needs. It is recommended that the child's parents or carer undertake any personal care, where possible.

If it is necessary to help a child or young person with personal tasks e.g. toileting or changing, the child or young person and their parents or carers must be encouraged to express a preference regarding the support and work together with the member of staff and/or Associated Person to develop practiced routines for personal care so that the child or young person and their parents/ carers know what to expect. It is also important to establish what the child or young person can do themselves and any support should be limited to what the child or young person cannot do. The child or young person and their parents or carers should also be encouraged to speak out about methods of support with which they are uncomfortable.

Do not take on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained e.g. manual assistance for a child or young person with a physical disability.

PHYSICAL CONTACT FOR DRILLS

Members of staff and/or Associated Persons who are training on particular techniques should demonstrate the move themselves or ask another player who can display the technique being taught. In exceptional circumstances, despite a demonstration or verbal description, it may be necessary to move the child or young person into a particular position. In these circumstances, the child or young person must be asked if they are comfortable to be moved into the correct position and a description given to the child or young person as to what it will involve e.g. "is it ok if I put my hands on your shoulders and move you into the correct position?" Manual support should be provided openly and must always be proportionate to the circumstances and must never involve contact with the child or young person's buttocks, genitals or breasts.

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, the member of staff or Associated Person should ask themselves, 'Is this the only option in order to manage the situation and ensure safety'?





THE FOLLOWING MUST ALWAYS BE CONSIDERED:

- Contact should always be avoided with the buttocks, genitals and breasts
- Members of staff and Associated Persons 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 of staff and Associated Persons should consider the circumstances, the risks associated with employing physical intervention compared with the risks of not employing physical intervention
- 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 of staff and Associated Persons should never employ physical interventions which are deemed to present an unreasonable risk to children or young people e.g. risk of injury
- Members of staff and Associated Persons shall never use physical intervention as a form of punishment
- Members of staff and Associated Persons shall never use a form of physical intervention for which they have not been trained

Any physical intervention used should be recorded as soon as possible after the incident by the member of staff and/or Associated Person and reported to a member of the Wellbeing and Protection Department as soon as possible. This can be done by completing the [Concern Recording Form](#) and emailing it to childrenswellbeing@scottishfa.co.uk or reporting it through Tootoot, if the individual has a Tootoot account with the Scottish FA.

A timely debrief for members of staff and Associated Persons, the child or young person and their parents/carers 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. Members of staff and Associated Persons, the child or young person and their parents/carers should be given an opportunity to talk about what happened in a calm and safe environment. There should also be a discussion with the child or young person and their parents/carers about the child/young person's needs and continued safe participation in the group, team or activity.





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