

# Good Practice When Working with Children FAQs

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## How can children be more involved in our sports club?

Children have the right to be involved in decisions that affect them and there are many ways that they can be actively involved in their club beyond just participating in activities. For example, the code of conduct: if your club does not have one or you are planning to update it, consulting with children can be very positive and provides the opportunity for them to contribute. Young people can be asked to come up with details for their own code of conduct and perhaps also what they expect from the coaches and volunteers working with them. All children, young people, coaches and volunteers can then sign up to the codes of conduct and agree to follow them.

Other areas of involvement can include fundraising, planning activities and perhaps representing the junior section on the committee/board. If your club is in need of funds children and young people often have excellent ideas for events or fundraising – so ask them. Asking children for ideas or supporting them to organise activities can be very motivating for them and boost their confidence and self-esteem, while also providing you with new activities they will really enjoy!

## The Child Protection Officer

### What is the role of a Child Protection Officer (CPO)?

A CPO is a designated person in the organisation who should be the main point of contact for issues relating to child protection. Various organisations use different terms e.g. Welfare Officer, Team Manager, Safeguarding Officer, Designated Person. Their role is generally to co-ordinate the implementation of child protection policies and procedures. Tasks may include disseminating information about the policies and procedures to those working with

children and young people, as well as informing parents, children and young people themselves; implementing reporting and recording procedures; maintaining contact details for local child protection agencies and so on. The CPO should never be the sole person responsible for protecting children within the organisation – this is the job of everyone albeit each person may have different roles and tasks to do.

### Does someone need to have qualifications to become a CPO?

No. There is training available for anyone who wishes to take on this role in their organisation. The most important thing is that they value and respect children and young people and that they are approachable. The CPO should have good communication skills, an understanding of the need for confidentiality and a degree of independence. We would recommend that the person has completed the [Safeguarding and Protecting Children workshop](#) before going on to specific [CPO training](#).

### Is it true that the Child Protection Officer for a club can't be a coach?

No. It is preferable that the CPO is someone who is not involved in coaching so that they are seen to be 'independent' and able to challenge coaching practices where necessary. However, many clubs are run by one or two volunteers who often 'wear several hats'. Ensuring that there is someone who has the lead responsibility for child protection is the most important thing.

### How do I manage physical contact when coaching children and young people?

Touching as part of coaching is not prohibited. Sometimes physical contact is unavoidable, even necessary, for example, to prevent an injury or accident. Physical contact should never be a surprise and always proportionate, appropriate, sensitive and respectful. Children should never be touched in any way which could be interpreted as sexual, and contact should be avoided with buttocks, the genital areas and breasts.

Good coaching practice includes verbally explaining tasks, demonstration and then, if required, physical support, ensuring that the child has consented to and is comfortable with contact. Children and young people should be supported to understand the boundaries around physical contact and to reject any contact which makes them feel uncomfortable.

### When taking children and young people on an overnight trip, what should the room arrangements be?

Adults taking children away on overnight stays should be aware that children are more vulnerable when away from their usual environment and the care of their parents. Organisers should consider the numbers, age and gender of the children taking part. Try to be sensitive to the needs of the group, e.g. adolescent girls are likely to value privacy. Adults should not share rooms with children. Children and parents should be consulted with and give approval to the sleeping arrangements in advance. Organisers should ensure that all accompanying adults have gone through the safe recruitment and selection procedure, have had appropriate training and signed up to the organisation's Code of Conduct. Overnights and

residential stays can be a great experience for children provided adults are vigilant and prepared to support children. The key is in planning ahead.

### Do we need a male and female chaperone on trips away from home?

Where possible it is recommended good practice to have a male and female present where there is a mixed group.

### Should there be separate changing areas for adults and children?

Most facilities are not set up to provide separate changing areas for adults and children. Organisers could think about co-ordinating sessions so that children and adults are unlikely to use changing facilities at the same time. Arrangements need to be practical and the supervision of children by group leaders who have been recruited and selected using the recommended procedures should ensure that risks are managed.

### Is there a law about how many hours children should train per week?

No. Some governing bodies of sport have introduced guidelines on this issue. In planning coaching sessions, coaches should take in to consideration the time a child is spending at school, study and other activities in which they are involved.

Where a child is required to take part in more intensive training, parents and coaches should be mindful of the child's right to rest (Article 31.1, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) and to enjoy childhood. Monitoring of training is crucial and the child's views about training should be respected. For further reading on this issue see Paulo David, Human Rights in Youth Sport (2005), Routledge.

### What are the legal ratios for adults to children?

There are no legal ratios for adults coaching children in sport. Some governing bodies of sport have developed their own, e.g. Scottish Swimming. Good practice in this area includes undertaking a risk assessment when planning the activity. The number of adults required to safely run the activity will depend on:

- Gender, age, level of experience and numbers of participants
- Whether any participants have a disability or special needs
- The qualifications and experience of the leaders
- The environment and equipment involved, e.g. a hazardous environment such as rock climbing or swimming requires a greater degree of supervision
- Whether transportation is required

- Health and safety requirements relevant to the activity. There should always be at least two adults present to supervise a group in order to respond to an emergency situation.

### Is the club's Child Protection Officer (CPO) ultimately responsible if someone at the club harms a child?

Firstly, if someone in the organisation harms a child in any way, the individual is responsible for their actions and will be accountable for them through the process of criminal justice and, where appropriate, the child protection system. Questions may be asked however as to what the organisation did to prevent such an incident from occurring. The organisation would then have to demonstrate that it did "everything that was reasonable in all the circumstances to safeguard the welfare" of the child. This would include, but is not limited to, practical things such as following a safe recruitment and selection procedure, ensuring those who work/volunteer with children have appropriate qualifications and training to do so, and that they receive management support. If the organisation failed to take reasonable action to prevent such an incident, the question of who in the organisation is liable will depend on the structure and governance or management of the organisation. This would be decided by courts if legal action was raised. Ultimately it must be agreed as to who is accountable, be it an individual or group of individuals, for ensuring that there are appropriate structures in place for the safe running of a club.

Remember, keeping children safe in clubs is everyone's responsibility and not the job of one person in the club. While the role of the CPO is to co-ordinate the implementation of child protection procedures, it is those who are responsible for running the club to ensure that this is done effectively.

### Can we take and use children's photographs in publishing material or on the web/social media?

There have been concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to children and young people through the use of photographs on the web and other publications. Photographs can be used as a means of identifying children when they are accompanied with personal information or the content of the photo can be used or adapted for inappropriate use. Sports organisations should develop a policy relating to the use of images of children and young people on their websites, Social Networking sites and in other publications. Parents and children should be informed what pictures will be taken and what they will be used for. Parental permission must be obtained for under 16s in writing. See Step 9 in [10 Steps to Safeguard Children in Sport](#) for some guidance.

## Do we need written consent from the parents of 16 to 18 year olds for photographs and trips away?

This should be detailed in the organisation's child protection guidelines. In Scotland, young people would generally be regarded as being able to consent to such activities from the age of 16. It is good practice however, to work in partnership with parents and to keep them informed.

## At what age can a child be left on their own?

The law in Scotland does not state at what age children can be left alone. It depends on whether the child is mature enough to cope in an emergency and feels happy about being left. Children mature at different ages and every child is an individual. The decision to leave a child alone should be made by the adult who has considered the environment and any potential hazards, child's age, maturity, safety and well-being and whether the child has any special needs. It is against the law to leave children in circumstances that are likely to put them in any kind of danger. Anyone aged 16 or over who has the care or control of a child under 16 could be prosecuted if they leave children in circumstances that could cause them harm. Leaving young children alone is never a good idea.