

ECB Guidance for Coaches Working with Children

Coaches have a vital role to play in safeguarding children in cricket and, at a club, will often become the focus for children and their activities. The ECB Coaching Philosophy states good coaching is about providing a fun and safe environment in which people, particularly children, can enjoy their first experience of cricket, gain some success and be motivated to want to go on playing. This philosophy ties into the ECB's own core values, in particular, the "Enjoyment" value which the ECB has identified as central to the ethos of the "Safe Hands" Programme.

Coaches who work with children are undertaking Regulated Activity. Clubs have a duty to check they are not barred from doing so – see ECB Guidance on Vetting Checks.

This section of "Safe Hands" provides guidance specifically for those involved in coaching cricket and covers the following areas:

- Promoting good practice
- Poor practice
- Practical coaching guidance
- ECB Coaches Association Code of Conduct

The guidance is intended for all those involved in coaching, whether they hold coaching qualifications or not.

Child abuse and harassment can take place in many situations, from the home and school to a sporting environment. As a cricket coach you will have regular contact with children and you should adopt the highest standards of practice and be responsible for identifying those in need of protection.

As a coach they will look up to you and if a child decides to talk to you about abuse, you need to know what to do. You also need to understand your duty of care towards young cricketers, the current guidance on good practice, and the need to act responsibly when you are around children. This will protect the children you coach and reduce the potential for misunderstandings and inappropriate allegations being made. The following guidelines should help you know what to do if you are worried about a child, and demonstrate how you can create a positive culture in cricket.

Good practice means:

Welcoming all children and parents/carers to the club, and having systems in place to ensure you do so.

- Ensuring cricket is welcoming, fun and enjoyable and that fair play is promoted
- Taking a player-centred (and child-centred) approach to coaching, planning sessions around the needs and abilities of the children who will be attending and adapting accordingly
- Being a friendly professional
- Treating all children equally, with respect and dignity
- Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol when coaching and being mindful of behaviour around the club at all times
- Always putting the welfare of children first, before winning or achieving goals by encouraging a constructive environment where healthy competition, skill development, fun and achievement are promoted in equal measures

Having the right people in place

- Always working in an open environment (for example, avoiding being alone with a child, and encouraging open communication with no secrets)
- Building balanced relationships based on trust which enable children to take part in the decision-making process. This will include routinely asking children if they have enjoyed activities in the training session and adapting activities to meet their expressed wishes, abilities, needs etc.
- Having excellent 'boundaries', so children know how to behave and what is expected of them
- Being in line with Home Office guidelines, which state, if you are in a position of trust and authority, you must not have sexual relationships with 16-17 year olds in your care
- Not tolerating acts of aggression
- Recognising the needs and abilities of children, avoiding too much training or competition and not pushing them against their will
- Giving positive and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Encouraging children to assess their performance based on their own mastery of skills, knowledge and love of the game, rather than on whether they won or lost. Helping children acknowledge the value that good opposition offers their own development as cricketers
- Working to ECB guidance on physical contact, where children are always consulted and their agreement gained before any contact is made
- Keeping up-to-date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance in sport
- Ensuring if mixed sex teams are taken away, they are always accompanied by a male and female member of staff
- Ensuring while on tour, you do not enter a child's room or invite them into your room – except in an emergency, i.e. when very

unwell

- Finding out if any children you are coaching have medical conditions that could be aggravated during playing or training
- Keeping a written record any time a child is injured in your care, along with details of any treatment provided
- Promoting good sportsmanship by encouraging children to be considerate of other athletes, officials and club volunteers and by being modest in victory and gracious in defeat
- Helping the ECB to work toward eradicating harassment and abuse of children from cricket

Poor practice means you must never:

- *Spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others*
- *Take or drop off a child at an event*
- *Take children to your home or transport them by car, where they will be alone with you*
- *Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games*
- *Share a room with a child*
- *Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching or physical abuse*
- *Take part in, or tolerate, behaviour that frightens, embarrasses or demoralises a cricketer or affects their self esteem*
- *Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged*
- *Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun*
- *Make a child cry as a form of control*
- *Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or ignored*
- *Do things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves*
- *Shower with a child*

- *Have inappropriate contact with children – for example, by text or social media. ECB guidance is that any electronic or online communications should be via parents and carers*

Any of these can make the environment feel less safe for children, and leave you open to allegations.

Practical coaching guidance on physical contact

The following guidance is about safeguarding children as they learn to play cricket. It will also help to protect coaches from unnecessary or malicious allegations when working with children. All adults must be appropriately dressed and professional when operating in a cricket environment with children.

Always conduct coaching sessions with at least one other adult present. The ECB understands physical contact between a child and an adult may be required to instruct, encourage, protect or comfort.

However, it is important to remember that in cricket today there is a multi-cultural mix of children from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, children with disabilities or special needs, and children who may have previously been or are currently being abused at home. Not all children are used to, or are comfortable, with any type of touching, be it friendly or otherwise. In many cultures girls in particular are uncomfortable about any kind of touching by a stranger.

All adults must understand that this touching not only involves touching children when showing them cricket postures, but can also include responsive or pleasant actions, for example, when asking the child to carry out a task, or celebrating a win. If any child is not comfortable with physical contact it should be made clear they can make their feelings known privately to the adult. Any contact should be lead by the child and not the adult.

Physically or visually impaired children may need to be touched in order to help them understand, acquire or visualise a cricket posture.

However, it must be remembered that the guidance detailed below still applies.

Please remember children can stereotype people by their appearance.

Never touch a child inappropriately. As a responsible adult you should only use physical contact if its aim is to:

- Develop sports skills or techniques
- Treat an injury
- Prevent an injury or accident from occurring
- Meet the requirements of the sport

You should seek to explain the reason for the physical contact to the child i.e. reinforcing the teaching or coaching skill. Unless the situation is an emergency, the adult should ask the child for permission. **Physical contact should always be intended to meet the child's needs NOT the adult's.**

- If a child becomes injured during a coaching session and the injury requires the child to be carried to a place of treatment, always seek support from another adult before moving the child. Any first aid administered should be in the presence of another adult or in open view of others
- If the child seems uncomfortable in any way with the physical contact, stop immediately
- If the child you are working with is visually impaired, you should tell them who you are and ask their permission before you come into physical contact with them
- Never attempt to adjust the grip of a child when in the normal batting stance position
- Never find yourself in a situation where you are the only adult present around children, for example in changing rooms,

showers, or on a minibus

- Where physical contact is for motivational or celebratory reasons, agree with the children, teachers or other appropriate adults that to praise good performance a 'High Five' or similar action will be used
- Never help children dress, for example, to put on pads, helmets, or clothing unless they request this and genuinely require assistance
- Never help children to put on an abdominal protector
- Never take on one to one coaching with a child unless another adult or parent is present
- If you need to communicate with a child for the purposes of coaching or passing on cricket information, use a parent's mobile telephone number. If you have agreed with the parents in advance to use the child's own mobile phone for communicating with them, under no circumstances make the number available for general circulation. Send texts to parents, copying in the child. This will also help parents make sure the child is where they need to be! See the ECB guidance on the use of Social media, texts and emails, in this kit-bag

If any of the following incidents take place or are observed, you **MUST** report them to the Club Welfare Officer and make a written note of the event using the ECB incident reporting form and inform parents where appropriate if:

- You accidentally hurt a child
- A child seems distressed in any manner
- A child acts in a sexually inappropriate manner
- A child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done

Responding to disclosures, suspicions and allegations

There may be a number of reasons where a coach finds it necessary to report a concern including:

- In response to something a child has said
- In response to something the coach sees
- In response to signs or suspicions of abuse
- In response to allegations made against a member of staff or volunteer
- In response to allegations made about a parent, carer or someone not working within cricket
- In response to bullying
- In response to a breach of code of conduct/poor practice
- Observation of inappropriate behaviour

Responding to a child who tells you about abuse

You need to:

- Stay calm; do not show disgust or disbelief
- Keep an open mind
- Do not dismiss the concern, make assumptions or judgements
- Listen carefully to what is said and take the child seriously. Let the child know that if what they tell you makes you at all concerned about them or someone else, you will have to pass the information on to someone who can help them
- Ask questions for clarification only and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer
- Reassure the child they have done the right thing by telling you
- Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared
- Be very careful not to promise that you will keep the information to yourself

Having the right people in place

- Record in writing what was said using the child's own words. Do this as soon as possible, using the ECB incident reporting form
- Avoid approaching any alleged abuser to discuss the concern. * BE AWARE that the child may use the word 'complaint' rather than allegation.
- Report the incident to the Club Welfare Officer

Recording the incident and confidentiality

Information passed to the ECB, children's social care, LADO and/or the police needs to be as helpful as possible, which is why it is important to make a detailed record at the time of the disclosure/concern. Use the ECB Incident Reporting Form wherever possible.

Information needs to include the following:

- Details of the child, for example, age/date of birth, address, and gender
- Details of the facts of the allegation or observations
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries
The child's account, if it can be given, regarding what has happened and how
- Witnesses to the incident(s)
- The name, address and date of birth of any alleged offender
- Any times, dates or other relevant information
- A clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay
- A signature, date and time on the report

SEE 'What to do if you have Concerns'

