

## **MANAGING DIFFICULT BEHAVIOURS a guide for Coaches, Teachers & Volunteers**

Coaches, staff and other volunteers may have to deal with challenging behaviour from the children or young people in their care. These guidelines aim to encourage good practice and suggest some strategies and sanctions which can be used.

### **Principles**

The guidelines are based on the following principles:

- The wellbeing of all children is the paramount consideration.
- All those involved in the sport including children, coaches and volunteers should have clear guidelines about the standard of behaviour that is expected and should be aware of their clubs Code of Conduct.
- Children must never be subject to any form of treatment that is harmful, abusive, humiliating or degrading and should always be able to maintain their respect and dignity.
- Some children's behaviour may be caused by medical or psychological conditions. Those working with children may need additional help including discussing the child's needs with parents and/or carers and possibly from external agencies that already support that child.
- Volunteers/staff should not attempt to respond to challenging behaviour by using techniques for which they have not been trained.
- Swimming can be a beneficial experience for all children and children should only be excluded from the club in exceptional circumstances.

### **Planning Activities**

Sessions should be planned around the group and take into consideration the needs of each child. Volunteers/staff should consider previous and likely behaviour. There should be strategies to manage risks agreed in advance. This should identify the appropriate number of adults required to manage and support the session safely, including being able to respond adequately to safeguard the group.

### **Agreeing Acceptable & Unacceptable Behaviour**

Coaches, volunteers, parents and children should be involved in developing an agreed statement of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and the sanctions to be applied in response to unacceptable behaviour.

Issues of behaviour and control should regularly be discussed with staff, volunteers, parents and children in the context of rights and responsibilities. When children are specifically asked, as a group, to draw up a 'List of Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviours and Sanctions for Unacceptable Behaviour' that will govern their participation in the group/team, they tend to arrive at a very sensible and working set of 'rules'. If and when such a list is compiled, every member of the group can be asked to sign it, as can new members as they join. This list of behaviours is often referred to as a Code of Conduct, Scottish Swimming have created a template of Codes of Conducts which can be tailored to suit the needs of individual clubs. See Appendices 9a – 9g.

## **Managing Challenging Behaviour**

In responding to challenging behaviour the response should always be proportionate to the actions, be imposed as soon as is practicable and be fully explained to the child and their parents/carers. In dealing with children who display negative or challenging behaviours, staff and volunteers might consider the following options:

- Time out - from the activity, group or individual work.
- Reparation - the act or process of making amends.
- Restitution - the act of giving something back.
- Behavioural reinforcement - rewards for good behaviour, consequences for negative behaviour.
- De-escalation of the situation - talking through with the child.
- Increased supervision by staff/volunteers.
- Use of individual 'contracts' or agreements for their future or continued participation.
- Sanctions or consequences e.g. missing an outing.
- Temporary or permanent exclusion

Seeking additional / specialist support through working in partnership with other agencies to ensure a child's needs are met appropriately e.g. referral for support to Children's Social Care, discussion with the child's key worker if they have one, speaking to the child's school about management strategies (all require parental consent unless the child is felt to be 'at risk' or 'in need of protection').

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.
- Being deprived of food, water, access to changing facilities or toilets or other essential facilities.
- Verbal intimidation, ridicule or humiliation.

Staff and volunteers should review the needs of any child for whom sanctions are frequently necessary. This review should involve the child, parents/carers and in some cases others involved in supporting or providing services for the child and his/her family, to ensure an informed decision is made about 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 him or herself, or others, he or she may have to be suspended or barred from the group or club activities.

### **Physical Interventions**

The use of physical intervention should always be avoided unless it is absolutely necessary to prevent a child injuring themselves or others, or causing serious damage to property. All forms of physical intervention should form part of a broader approach to the management of challenging 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 volunteer should ask themselves, 'Is this the only option in order to manage the situation and ensure safety?' It is good practice to ensure that if you have to physically intervene in a situation with a child/young person, it is in the least restrictive way necessary to prevent them from getting hurt, and used only after all other strategies have been exhausted. Studies have shown that, where this is the case, children and young people understand and accept the reasons for the intervention.

The following must always be considered:

- Contact should be avoided with buttocks, genitals and breasts. Staff/volunteers 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 whose behaviour is of immediate concern.
- Staff/ volunteers 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 young person and the nature of harm/ damage they might cause.
- All forms of physical intervention should employ only a reasonable amount of force -i.e. the minimum force needed to avert injury to a person or serious damage to property - applied for the shortest period of time.
- Staff/volunteers should never employ physical interventions, which are deemed to present an unreasonable risk to children or staff/volunteers.
- Staff/volunteers shall never use physical intervention as a form of punishment.

### **Physical intervention should NOT involve inflicting pain**

Where children are identified as having additional needs or behaviours that are likely to require physical intervention this should be discussed with parents/carers and where necessary the club will seek advice from or to work in partnership with external agencies (e.g. Children's Social Care) to ensure that a 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.

Any physical intervention used should be recorded as soon as possible after the incident by the staff/volunteers involved using the Incident / Wellbeing Child Protection Report Form Appendix 32 and passed to the Club Wellbeing & Protection Officer as soon as possible.

### **Views of the Child**

There should always be a debriefing session for staff, volunteers, parents and children after an incident where physical intervention was used. This should include an opportunity to talk about the incident and about how the child can continue to participate safely.

### **Recording**

In all cases details of any incidents and what actions took place must be recorded and report to the clubs Wellbeing & Protection Officer.