

Physical contact – Children & Young people

Introduction

Within in a sporting (bowls) context, circumstances may present themselves in which it is appropriate, necessary and/or beneficial for an adult to make physical contact with a child. This might be to aid for their safety, development or technique.

This guidance will provide coaches, parents, carers and volunteers with the confidence in making appropriate and safe contact with children and young people.

Children and young people should regularly be reminded of their rights to say what level of contact they are comfortable with at any given time. They should always feel listened to and respected when speaking out.

When is physical contact appropriate?

Adults in positions of trust and responsibility should not make gratuitous or unnecessary physical contact with children and young people.

Physical contact should always take place in the interest of and for the benefit of the child and young person and not for the adult involved.

Physical contact should only occur when necessary, to:

- Develop sport specific skills or techniques
- Treat an injury
- Prevent an injury or accident from occurring
- Meet the requirements of the sport
- Comfort a distressed child or to celebrate their successes
 - Adults should use their discretion to ensure that such contact does not become (or is observed as) unnecessary or unjustified contact. Particularly repeatedly with the same child or young person over a period of time.
 - It is important to note that everyone will have a different level of boundaries and preferences with regards to physical contact, space and touch and should be respected at all times.

Physical contact best practices

Unless the situation is an emergency, adults working with children in sport should:

- Explain to the child the reason for the physical contact
- Always ask the child or young person to make the contact
- Encourage every child or young person to share any concerns they have around any physical contact that makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened.
 - Getting feedback and asking questions such as “am I holding too tight?” or “is this still ok?” to a child or young person will mean they are

more likely to feel comfortable in disclosing or sharing when they feel hurt, discomfort or have any injuries.

Physical contact with children and young people should not:

- Involve touch the genital areas, buttocks, breasts or any other part of the body that may cause a child to feel distress or embarrassed.
- Take place out of sight of others or in secret.

Sports clubs and coaches should:

- Monitor contact between children and young people where possible and appropriate to do so.
- Discuss and form guidance about special contact with children and young people and share this with your membership, volunteers and coaches.
- Provide inductions for new young members and their parents to cover the guidance about physical contact that might be required when playing bowls

Children who need specific assistance due to disability or injury:

- In the case of young person with a disability, needing specific support or assistance, the following guidance should be followed;
 - Parents or carers should be asked to undertake all intimate or personal care tasks their child – this would not be appropriate for the role of a coach or volunteer who are leading the activity
 - Any required assistance should be discussed with the child and their parents or carers prior to taking part in the activity
 - Where possible, children should be asked of their preferred way of being assisted
 - When assisted, lifted or otherwise manual supported, children should be treated with dignity and respect
 - Adults who will be assisting should receive the appropriate training to minimise any risk of injury to either the child or to themselves.

Physical punishment

Any form of physical punishment of children within sport or physical activity is unlawful. This includes any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by the way of physical intervention to prevent a young person from harming themselves, others or the environment around them.

Sports science and medical roles

Sports science, medicine and other roles within sport, may require physical contact in order for tasks to be carried out effectively. These roles should always be undertaken by appropriately trained and qualified practitioners.