

Codes of conduct: key principles

What are the key principles of a code of conduct?

Some key principles of a code of conduct are that you should:

- prioritise children
- never have sole responsibility for them
- only provide personal or intimate care in an emergency
- never give out personal details and avoid social networking
- always behave appropriately
- listen and respect children and avoid favouritism
- remember you are in a position of trust and act in a professional manner
- always report any concerns about a child or the behaviour of a colleague.

Many sports organisations, governing bodies and clubs have established specific codes of conduct for adults (including coaches, officials, volunteers, parents and so on) and for participants, which they require individuals to sign up to. If you are not sure if your organisation or club has a code of conduct for your sport, try to find out.

What should a code of conduct cover?

Codes of conduct should:

- outline expected good practice
- be written in language appropriate to the group to which they apply
- create an environment in which bullying, verbal abuse, racism, sexism or abuse based on someone's disability are not tolerated
- give clear guidance about when behaviour might be considered to be inappropriate in a relationship between adults and young people

- also give specific guidance about arrangements for personal or intimate care tasks for very young or disabled children who are additionally vulnerable to abuse
- refer to both online and offline behaviour
- set out how any breaches to codes will be managed.

Principles for children and young people

While the following principles mainly apply to children and young people, it is important that staff and volunteers working with children, and their parents/carers are also aware of and promote them:

- Fun – you have a right to enjoy your participation
- Fair play
 - treat others with the same respect and fairness that you would like to be shown
 - stick to the rules for the event and your sport
 - challenge or speak out about behaviour that falls below the expected standards.
- Equity
 - demonstrate fair play
 - respect differences in gender, disability, culture, race, ethnicity, and religious belief systems between yourself and others
 - appreciate that all participants bring something valuable and different
 - show patience with others
 - challenge discrimination and prejudice.
- Do not engage in or condone bullying of any sort.
- Responsibility – look out for yourself and the welfare of others.
- Do not take part in any irresponsible, abusive, inappropriate or illegal behaviour.
- Be organised and be on time.
- Friendship – take time to thank those who help you take part, whether your family, coach, school or teammates.



Principles for adults and volunteers working with children

A code of conduct for staff and volunteers should at least include these four principles:

- **Rights:** Staff/volunteers working at any event must respect the rights of children and young people, promoting their welfare and their individual needs.
- **Relationships:** Staff/volunteers should promote relationships with participants and others that are based on openness, honesty, trust and respect. They must not engage with participants in behaviour that is abusive or inappropriate. They must respond to any concerns about a child's welfare, and work in partnership with other organisations in the child's best interests.
- **Responsibilities:** Staff/volunteers must demonstrate proper personal/professional behaviour at all times, promoting positive role models for the children and young people they are working with. Staff must ensure that children and young people are provided with a safe environment, which maximises benefits and minimises risks to them.
- **Equity:** All staff/volunteers must demonstrate commitment to respecting differences between staff and participants in terms of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability, culture and religious belief systems.

Developing a code of conduct

When developing codes of conduct, you should consider:

- behaviour (including bullying) and personal conduct
- personal appearance
- use of electronic devices for e-communication
- attendance
- consumption of alcohol
- smoking
- illegal drugs and substances
- sexual activity between young people
- sexual activity between adults and young people (abuse of positions of trust)
- breaches of codes of conduct, complaints and disciplinary procedures
- sanctions.

Specific codes of conduct will depend on your particular circumstances, but should reflect the various activities and groups of adults, children and young people involved.

How do you address sexual activity?

Within any activity, sexual relationships can and do occur between young people. Organisations must be aware of the law relating to sexual behaviour and implement their respective code of conduct. We strongly recommend that you include guidance on this in any safeguarding plan. Your guidelines should address sexual activity between young people, and between adults and young people.

Sexual activity between young people must be prohibited. Inappropriate or criminal sexual behaviour on the part of a young person may result in disciplinary action, as well as an investigation by statutory agencies (such as the police or social care) under local procedures for children and young people who sexually harm others.



Sexual relationships between adults and children under the age of 16 years are illegal. Sexual relationships between adults and young people over the age of 16 but not yet adults raise serious questions about the power imbalance inherent in the relationship. An adult in a position of trust or authority has significant power and influence over a young person.

Sexual activity between adults and young people over the age of 16 but not yet adults must be prohibited where the adult is in a position of trust, including, for example young people who are volunteers. For some adults in a position of trust, such as teachers, it may be unlawful.

Inappropriate or illegal behaviour must be reported immediately to police and children's social care/social services for investigation and may lead to suspension.

