



*Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) Briefing which provides practical guidelines for managing challenging behaviour for children and young people in sporting activities.*

## **MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR**

Staff/Volunteers who deliver sports activities to children may, on occasions, be required to deal with a child's challenging behaviour.

These guidelines aim to promote good practice and are based on the following principles:

- The welfare of the child is the paramount consideration;
- Children must never be subject to any form of treatment that is harmful, abusive, humiliating or degrading;
- The specific needs a child may have (e.g. communication, behaviour, management, comprehension and so on) should be discussed with their parent/carer and where appropriate the child, before activities start. Where appropriate it may be helpful to record the details of any agreed plan or approach and provide copies to all parties;
- Every child should be supported to participate. Consideration to exclude a child from activities should apply only as a last resort and after all efforts to address any challenge have been exhausted, in exceptional circumstances where the safety of that child or other children cannot be maintained.

### **Planning Activities**

Planning for activities should include consideration of whether any child involved may need additional support or supervision to participate safely. This should address:

- Assessment of additional risk associated with the child's behaviour;
- Appropriate supervision ratios and whether numbers of adults should be increased;
- Information sharing for all/volunteers on managing any challenging behaviour to ensure a consistent approach;
- Specialist expertise or support that may be needed from carers or outside agencies. This is particularly relevant where it is identified that a child may need a level of physical intervention to participate safely. (See below)

### **Agreeing Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviours**

Staff, volunteers, children, young people and parents/carers should be involved in developing an agreement about:

- What constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (Code of Conduct);
- The range of sanctions which may be applied in response to unacceptable behaviour.

This can be done at the start of the season, in advance of a trip away from home or as part of a welcome session at a residential camp. It should involve the views of children and young people to encourage better buy in and understanding.

Where challenges are anticipated in light, for example of a child's impairment or other medical condition, a clear plan/agreement should be established and written down.

Ensure that parents/carers understand the expectations on their children, and ask them to reinforce this ahead of any trip or activity.

### **Managing Challenging Behaviour**

In responding to challenging behaviour, the response should always be:

- Proportionate to the actions you are managing;
- Imposed as soon as is practicable;
- 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 with the child and distracting them from challenging behaviour;
- Increased supervision by staff/volunteers;
- Use of individual 'contracts' or agreements for the child's future or continued participation;
- Sanctions or consequences e.g. missing an outing or match;
- Seeking additional/specialist support through working in partnership with other agencies;
- Temporary or permanent exclusion.

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.

### **Physical Intervention**

Staff/Volunteers should consider the risks associated with employing physical intervention compared with the risks of not employing physical intervention.

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;
- Aim to achieve an outcome that is in the best interests of the child whose behaviour is of immediate concern;
- Form part of a broader approach to the management of challenging behaviour;
- Be the result of conscious decision making and not a reaction to an adult's frustration;
- Employ the minimum force needed to avert injury to a person or serious damage to property – applied for the shortest period of time;
- Used only after all other strategies have been exhausted;
- Be recorded as soon as possible using the appropriate organisational reporting form and procedure.

Parents should always be informed following an incident where a coach/volunteer has had to physically intervene with their particular child.

Physical intervention must not:

- Involve contact with buttocks, genitals and breasts;
- Be used as a form of punishment;
- Involve inflicting pain.

### Views of the Child

A timely de-brief for staff/volunteers, the child and parents should always take place in a calm environment following an incident where physical intervention has been used. Even children who haven't directly been involved in the situation may need to talk about what they have witnessed.

There should also be a discussion with the child and parents about the child's needs and continued safe participation in the group or activity.

### A Policy for Managing Challenging Behaviour

All organisations that have a duty of care to children and young people should develop and implement a policy and procedures on managing challenging behaviour.

It should include:

- The standard of conduct expected from staff/volunteers and participants;
- How the organisation will respond to unacceptable behaviours;
- How your organisation will respond to 'high risk' behaviours;
- The circumstances in which physical interventions will be used;
- Guidance, support and/or training available to staff/volunteers;
- The circumstances where external agencies will be contacted for support or in response to concerns, e.g. – Children's Social Care Services, the Police;
- What will happen after an incident with regards to debrief.