

# Children in Sport: A Guide for Parents & Carers

## Introduction

Greater Manchester Sports Partnership recognises that the parents play a vital role in their child's involvement in sport. This information is designed to help parents who want to ensure that their child has the most positive experience within sport. It provides tips and information on how parents can choose the right sports club for their child, how to support their child in sport and how they can get more involved with their child's sport.

Greater Manchester Sports Partnership welcomes questions about our activities and the safety of the environment in which our activities take place. We have a child protection policy, including statement on, and guidelines about, keeping children safe. For further information visit the Child Protection pages on our website – [www.greatersport.co.uk](http://www.greatersport.co.uk).

Contact us on 0161 223 1002 for further details.

## What should you check out? - General Questions

- Are the staff and volunteers suitable to work with children? All staff and volunteers should have gone through a thorough recruitment process, which includes references and police checks if a position involves regular contact with children.
- Is there a written code of behaviour which outlines good practice when working with children? An environment that allows oppressive behaviour such as bullying, inappropriate aggression, racism and sexism is not acceptable.
- How does the organisation manage staff and volunteers? There should be a volunteer coordinator in each club, or someone in charge who supervises staff.
- Do they have regular training for staff and volunteers? All workers should have had training in child protection and health and safety.
- How can children and their parents or carers voice their concerns? Each organisation should tell you where to go and what to do if you or your child has any worries.
- How does the organisation provide for intimate care needs? In the case of very young children, or those with a disability, you should check out routines for toileting, feeding and administering medicine.
- Does the organisation have a health and safety policy? Find out if there is a leader qualified in first aid, that there is a first aid box and that the premises have passed fire regulations.

## What should you look for in a junior sports club or team?

So you have got a budding young sports-enthusiast on your hands. To help them get the best from their sport you may wish to consider enrolling them at a local sports club. There are probably a number of sports clubs in your area that may cater for young people so how do you decide which one is best for your child and how do you know if they are safe? Giving some consideration to the following questions will help you in making your decision:

Is the club accredited by its National Governing Body or Sport England? Most National Governing Bodies (NGB) of sport operate a Club Accreditation Scheme for junior clubs. The schemes have been put in place to ensure that clubs offer safe, effective and child-friendly programmes for juniors. In order to gain accreditation, clubs must demonstrate that they meet the criteria outlined in the scheme. Find out if the club you are interested in has met (or is working towards) the criteria of their appropriate scheme.

Does the philosophy of the club meet with the needs of your child? Some clubs place a greater emphasis on competition and entering competitive leagues. If your child is not ready to compete, or does not want to compete, then other less competitive clubs may be more appropriate.

Does the club operate in safe environments with safe equipment? The club should have a member of staff / volunteer who is responsible for maintaining equipment and ensuring its safety. There should also be access to first aid equipment at all training / competition sessions.

Does the club have a child protection policy? All clubs should have, or be working towards having, a child protection policy; including a statement on, and guidance about, keeping children safe. This should include procedures for when your child is both training and travelling away to take part in matches / competitions.

Are the coaches and helpers suitable to work with children? All staff should go through a proper recruitment process that includes interviews and references; and where appropriate, police checks. Staff should also have training in child protection and health and safety.

What kind of atmosphere is created during training sessions? There needs to be a positive atmosphere where children are actively learning and having fun during training sessions. The emphasis should be on action, skill development and fun for all participants, not just for a gifted few. Ask if you and your child can visit one of the training sessions prior to them joining the club.

**How can you best support your child in sport?** Parents play an essential role whatever their child's level of involvement. In many cases the support and interest of one or other parent is crucial to a child's participation.

So how can you as a parent maximise your contribution whilst, at the same time, ensuring that both you and your child enjoy their involvement in sport? Listed here are some general guidelines:

### **Some Do's**

**Do** focus on improved social, physical and technical skills, and not just the outcome of your child's game / match.

**Do** get interested in your child's sport. Learn the rules and attend some meetings, practices and competitions.

**Do** support the principles of fair play - respect players, opponents, officials, rules and coaches.

**Do** encourage non-sport identities so sport is only a part of your child's life.

**Do** inform your child's coach of any injury, medical condition, illness or special needs that may affect their participation.

### **Some Don'ts:**

**Don't** allow your child to train / play when injured, however important a particular game / match or training session seems to be.

**Don't** allow the situation to develop where your child is frightened of losing because of the way you respond.

**Don't** turn a blind eye to bad behaviour, cheating or bad manners.

**Don't** coach from the sidelines - players need to be independent and think for themselves.

**Don't** attend every training session or competition - your child may become over-reliant on parental presence or advice.

### **How can you get involved in your child's team/club?**

Junior sports clubs rely on support from parents and other volunteers to maintain the services that they offer to young people. However, most clubs are co-ordinated by a few volunteers and are therefore very grateful for further support, especially from parents. Getting involved needn't mean a big time commitment for you. There are a wide variety of tasks that a club may require support with, utilising skills you might possess. Such tasks may include help with:

- Club administration (e.g., book-keeping, fundraising etc)
- Transport
- Team management
- Refreshments
- First Aid
- Refereeing / umpiring
- Coaching
- Ground Maintenance

The Greater Manchester Sports Partnership offers support and training programmes. For further information on getting involved in youth sport, including details of how you can become a coach, contact our Volunteer Development Officer or Coach Development Officer via our website or on 0161 223 1002

### **Club Danger Signals**

Be very wary of a club where staff or volunteers behave in the following ways:

- Parents are discouraged from watching or becoming involved in training or other activities;
- Rough play, sexual innuendo or humiliating punishments are tolerated;
- Individuals take charge and operate independently of the club or sport guidelines;
- Coaches show favouritism or personally reward particular children;
- Inappropriate physical contact is tolerated;
- Club staff invite children to spend time alone with staff or volunteers outside of scheduled sports activities, or request this through parents;
- Poor communication with parents and lack of parental involvement;

Or if children suddenly drop out or stop going for no apparent reason.