Promoting Best Practice

Guidance for Coaches and others working with Children
Throughout this document the term coach should be taken to include all instructors and coaches, paid or voluntary, regardless of their level of qualification.

Coaches have a vital role to play in safeguarding children in snowsports. Good coaching is about providing an enjoyable and safe environment in which children can enjoy the sport and achieve their potential.

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse. It is therefore NOT the responsibility of employees or participants in snowsports to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place. It is however their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse, and to act if they have concerns about the welfare of the child.

This section will help identify what is meant by good practice and poor practice.

Promoting Good Practice

As a requirement of qualification all coaches are required to attend a SCUK Safeguarding and Protecting Children workshop every 3 years.

Child abuse and harassment can take place in many situations, from the home and school to a snowsports environment. Snowsport coaches have regular contact with children and should adopt the highest standards of practice and be responsible for identifying those in need of protection.

As a coach, the child will look up to you and if they decide to talk to you about abuse, you need to know what to do. You also need to understand your duty of care towards children in snowsports, the current guidance on good practice and the need to act responsibly when you are around children. This will not only protect the children you coach, but reduce the potential for misunderstandings and inappropriate allegations being made.

- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets)
- Make the experience of snowsports fun and enjoyable: promote fairness, confront, and deal with bullying
- Treat all children with equal respect and dignity
- Do not swear in front of children and do not allow swearing to go unchallenged
- Be an excellent role model; this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol whilst in the company of children under your care
- Always put the welfare of the child first, before winning, the child's welfare being paramount
- Be acutely aware of the power that a coach, volunteer or official develops with participants in snowsports and avoid any inappropriate or intimate interaction (sexual or otherwise)
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with children. Where any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly and with the consent of the child with younger children that of their parent/carer. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the child's consent has been given
- Obtain written parental consent for any significant travel arrangements e.g. overnight stays
- Ensure that if boys and girls are taken away, they are always accompanied by a male and female member of staff
- Ensure that at away events an unaccompanied adult does not enter a child's room or invite a child to their room except in an emergency, e.g the child is very unwell
- Do not engage in a sexual relationship with anyone under the age of 18 in your care
- Always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Keep up to date with technical skills relative to your coaching, qualifications, and insurance
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of the child and do not risk sacrificing welfare in a desire for personal achievements. This means avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing children against their will

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- Secure written parental consent for the organisation to act in *loco parentis*, and for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises
- Promote good sportsmanship, encouraging children to be considerate of other athletes, officials and volunteers and by being modest in victory and gracious in defeat
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given
- Help SSC/W to work towards eradicating harassment and abuse of children in snowsports
- Abide by the SSC/W Coaches Code of Practice

Examples of poor practice

- Unnecessarily spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others
- At an away event, go into a child's room without another adult in a position of responsibility
- Share a room with a child
- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- Take part in, or tolerate, behaviour that frightens, embarrasses, or demoralises a child or affects their self esteem
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded, or not acted upon
- Shower with a child
- Do things of a personal nature that the child can do for themselves
- Take a child alone in a car with you (unless it is an emergency)

Any of these situations can leave you open to allegations and many of these actions would be difficult to defend

When cases arise where it is impractical or impossible to avoid certain situations, the task should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the parent/carer and the child involved. The reasons for deviating from the above good practice should be documented and made available to the relevant people concerned.

If during your care you accidentally hurt a child, a child seems distressed in any manner, acts in a sexually inappropriate manner, misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done; you should report such incidents as soon as possible to another colleague and make a written note of it. The Lead Safeguarding Officer must be informed as soon as possible. Parents should also be informed where appropriate.

Guidance on physical contact

Physical contact can be used appropriately to instruct, encourage, protect, or comfort. The aim of guidelines relating to physical contact is to provide adults and children with appropriate types and contexts for touching and an understanding of what physical contact should reasonably be expected within the sport and the purpose of this.

The following guidance is intended to safeguard children whilst they are in your care in a snowsports environment. Regardless of how many children are present, there should always be a minimum of two coaches or appropriately vetted club personnel present. This ensures at least basic cover in the event of something impacting on the availability of one of the adults (e.g in the event of an accident). It will also help to protect coaches and other responsible adults from unnecessary or malicious allegations when working with children.

By its nature, coaching may require some physical contact between coach and athlete. In this context the term “coach” includes anyone engaged in the assistance, guidance or supervision of children in a snowsports situation – ***provided they have had the recommended training to do so.*** This is accepted as reasonable practice. The following principles of good practice will help to ensure that problems and difficulties do not arise.

At all times coaches should be aware there may be a multi-cultural mix of children from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, children who may already be on the Child Protection Register or have previously been, or are currently being abused at home. Not all children are used to, or are comfortable, with any type of touching, be it friendly or otherwise. In many cultures, girls in particular, are uncomfortable about any kind of touching by a stranger.

Physical contact between adults and children should only be used by appropriately qualified people when the aim is to:

- Develop sports skills or techniques
- Treat an injury
- Prevent an injury or accident occurring
- Meet the requirements of the particular sport, e.g. sports massage
- Give appropriate comfort to a child or appropriately celebrating a success with them

Physical contact should:

- Not involve touching genital areas, buttocks or breasts
- Meet the needs of the child and not the needs of the adult
- Be carried out by those appropriately qualified to do so
- Be fully explained to the child and, with the exception of an emergency, permission should be sought
- Not take place in secret or out of sight of others

If it is thought necessary to use physical contact to demonstrate a move or position, review your teaching methods and consider asking another athlete to demonstrate. Explanation and demonstration might make physical contact unnecessary. If there is no alternative, ask permission and ensure that touching is done in an appropriate manner. Never use any physical contact in an isolated environment – always be in public view.

Repeated physical contact and in particular with the same child, is inappropriate and may be misconstrued by both the child and observers. Coaches should always consider appropriateness, potential carelessness, unnecessary repetition, and context. Think it through and if in doubt – don't.

First Aid

Where possible, two first aiders should treat casualties or a first aider accompanied by another adult of the same gender as the casualty. Never take the casualty alone into a room and close the door behind you. Always leave the door open, or attend to them in an open environment. Sometimes a little privacy for the casualty may be required, for example where they need to remove clothing and unless it is an emergency, there should always be two adults present. It is important at the first opportunity to fill in an Accident Report form, no matter how trivial the accident may seem. Clubs can write their own or use the Accident Report Form template provided. Parents should always be informed of injuries.

Relationships with 16 – 17 year old athletes

Positions of Trust

It is illegal for Coaches and others in Positions of Trust (POT) in relation to athletes aged 16 and 17 years to engage in sexual relationships with them even though they are over the age of sexual consent). Coaches should ensure they maintain healthy, positive, and professional relationships with all athletes.

Positions of trust within snowsport would include, but are not limited to, coaches, instructors, people assisting with coaching, CWOs, managers and responsible adults, physios, sports psychologists etc. Coaches in particular need to ensure they understand the power and influence they may have over children they are coaching. In a competitive environment this dependency will be increased. The relationship, in essence, is no different to that between a school teacher and pupils in their care.

It is particularly important that POT is explained to any young coaches as the guidelines include 16 & 17 year old coaching assistants who may wish to develop a relationship with someone the same age. It can be very difficult for young coaches who may still be racing alongside athletes they are coaching, to naviagte the changes in relationships required of them. The transition from trainee to coach can be difficult, young coaches will need more support to make this transition.

If they are coaching the 16/17 year old, or in a position of responsibility, they must not enter into a relationship with them due to the unequal power of the relationship. Failure to comply would be a Disciplinary matter.
For more information on Position of Trust
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/police-crime-sentencing-and-

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courts-bill-2021-factsheets/police-crime-sentencing-and-courts-bill-2021-positions-of-trust-factsheet

Clubs who employ coaches, (paid or voluntary), must ensure that they are aware of and, throughout their activities with children, comply with this guidance.

Clubs should have in place an induction programme for new coaches.

Clubs should have in place and induction process for new members and their parents which includes guidance on behaviour and which collects relevant medical information.

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