

# Code of Practice for Sports Coaches

**Rights/Relationships/Responsibilities**





# Code of Practice for Sports Coaches

Coaches play a crucial role in the development of any sport and in the lives of the performers they coach. Good coaches ensure participants in sport have positive experiences and are therefore more likely to continue in their sport and achieve their potential.

Coaching, as an emerging profession, must demonstrate a high degree of honesty, integrity and competence at all levels. The need for coaches to understand and act upon their responsibilities is of critical importance to sport, as is the need to protect the key concept of participation for fun and enjoyment as well as achievement. This is implicit within good coaching practice and promotes a professional image of the good practitioner. This Code of Practice defines all that is best in good coaching practice.

## Good coaching practice needs to reflect the following key principles:

### • Rights

Coaches must respect and champion the rights of every individual to participate in sport.

### • Relationships

Coaches must develop a relationship with performers (and others) based on openness, honesty, mutual trust and respect.

### • Responsibilities - personal standards

Coaches must demonstrate proper personal behaviour and conduct at all times.

### • Responsibilities - professional standards

To maximise the benefits and minimise the risks to performers, coaches must attain a high level of competence through qualifications, and a commitment to ongoing training that ensures safe and correct practice.

These principles are defined in more detail further in this brochure.

# Code of Practice for Sports Coaches

| Principle     | Statement   | Issues   | Actions   |
|---------------|---|--|---|
| Rights        | Coaches must respect and champion the rights of every individual to participate in sport                              | <p>Coaches should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>assist in the creation of an environment where every individual has the opportunity to participate in a sport or activity of their choice</li> <li>create and maintain an environment free of fear and harassment</li> <li>recognise the rights of all performers to be treated as individuals</li> <li>recognise the rights of performers to confer with other coaches and experts</li> <li>promote the concept of a balanced lifestyle, supporting the well-being of the performer both in and out of the sport.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Treat all individuals in sport with respect at all times.</li> <li>Do not discriminate on the grounds of gender, marital status, race, colour, disability, sexual identity, age, occupation, religious beliefs or political opinion.</li> <li>Do not condone or allow any form of discrimination to go unchallenged.</li> <li>Do not publicly criticise or engage in demeaning descriptions of others.</li> <li>Be discreet in any conversations about performers, coaches or any other individuals.</li> <li>Communicate with and provide feedback to performers in a manner that reflects respect and care.</li> </ul>   |
| Principle     | Statement   | Issues   | Actions   |
| Relationships | Coaches must develop a relationship with performers (and others) based on openness, honesty, mutual trust and respect | <p>Coaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>must not engage in behaviour that constitutes any form of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, bullying)</li> <li>should promote the welfare and best interests of their performers</li> <li>must avoid sexual intimacy with performers either while coaching them or in the period of time immediately following the end of the coaching relationship</li> <li>must take action if they have a concern about the behaviour of an adult towards a child</li> <li>should empower performers to be responsible for their own decisions</li> <li>should clarify the nature of the coaching services being offered to performers</li> <li>should communicate and cooperate with other organisations and individuals in the best interests of performers.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be aware of the physical needs of performers, especially the developmental stage and needs of children and young people, and ensure that training loads and intensities are appropriate.</li> <li>Ensure that physical contact is appropriate and necessary, and is carried out within recommended guidelines (provided by governing bodies of sport) with the performer's full consent and approval.</li> <li>Do not engage in any form of sexually related contact with any performer for whom they have responsibility. This is strictly forbidden as is sexual innuendo, flirting or inappropriate gestures and terms. Coaches are in a position of power and trust in relation to performers. By entering into an intimate/sexual relationship with a performer; a coach may be deemed guilty of abusing this position and, in relation to children and young people, this may also be unlawful.</li> <li>Inform parents or guardians immediately if you are at all concerned about the welfare of a child, unless there are concerns that this would not be in the interests of the child.</li> <li>Know and understand the relevant governing body of sport or employer child protection/safeguarding policies and procedures in this regard and adhere to them.</li> <li>Follow the reporting procedures laid down by your governing body of sport or employer if you have a concern – non-action is unacceptable.</li> <li>Arrange to transfer a performer to another coach if it is clear that an inappropriate or intimate relationship is developing.</li> <li>Discuss with parents and other interested parties the potential impact of the programme on the performer:</li> <li>Respect performers' opinions when making decisions about their participation in their sport.</li> <li>Encourage performers to take responsibility for their own development and actions.</li> <li>Allow performers to discuss and participate in the decision-making process.</li> <li>Discuss and agree with performers what information is confidential.</li> <li>Inform performers or their parents/guardians of the requirements of the sport.</li> <li>Inform performers or their parents/guardians of any potential costs involved in accessing the coaching services on offer.</li> <li>Be aware of and communicate on any conflict of interest as soon as it becomes apparent.</li> <li>Do not work with any other coach's performer without first discussing or agreeing it with both the coach and the performer involved.</li> <li>Identify and agree with performers which other experts or organisations could offer appropriate services.</li> </ul> |

Continued overleaf

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| Principle                                 | Statement   | Issues  | Actions   |
|---|---|---|---|
| Responsibilities – personal standards     | Coaches must demonstrate proper personal behaviour and conduct at all times   | Coaches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• must be fair, honest and considerate to performers and others in their sport</li> <li>• should project an image of health, cleanliness and functional efficiency</li> <li>• must be positive role models for performers at all times.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operate within the rules and the spirit of your sport.</li> <li>• Educate performers on issues relating to the use of performance-enhancing drugs in sport and cooperate fully with UK Sport and governing bodies of sport policies.</li> <li>• Maintain the same level of interest and support when a performer is sick or injured.</li> <li>• Display high standards in use of language, manner, punctuality, preparation and presentation.</li> <li>• Encourage performers to display the same qualities.</li> <li>• Do not smoke, drink alcohol or use recreational drugs before or while coaching. This reflects a negative image and could compromise the safety of your performers.</li> <li>• Display control, respect, dignity and professionalism to all involved in your sport.</li> </ul>  |
| Principle                                 | Statement   | Issues  | Actions   |
| Responsibilities – professional standards | To maximise the benefits and minimise the risks to performers, coaches must attain a high level of competence through qualifications, and a commitment to ongoing training that ensures safe and correct practice | Coaches will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure the environment is as safe as possible, taking into account and minimising possible risks</li> <li>• promote the execution of safe and correct practice</li> <li>• be professional and accept responsibility for their actions</li> <li>• make a commitment to providing a quality service to their performers</li> <li>• actively promote the positive benefits to society of participation in sport, including the positive contribution sport can make to achieving improved outcomes for children and young people<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• contribute to the development of coaching as a profession by exchanging knowledge and ideas with others, and by working in partnership with other agencies and professionals</li> <li>• gain governing bodies of sport coaching qualifications appropriate to the level at which they coach.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the guidelines of your governing body of sport or employer:</li> <li>• Plan all sessions so they meet the needs of the performers and are progressive and appropriate.</li> <li>• Maintain appropriate records of your performers.</li> <li>• Recognise and accept when it is appropriate to refer a performer to another coach or specialist.</li> <li>• Seek to achieve the highest level of qualification available.</li> <li>• Demonstrate commitment to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) by undertaking/attending learning opportunities to maintain up-to-date knowledge of technical developments in your sport.</li> <li>• Undertake/attend CPD opportunities to maintain up-to-date knowledge and understanding of other issues that might impact on both you and your performers.</li> <li>• Be aware of the social issues and how your sport can contribute to local, regional or national initiatives.</li> <li>• Actively participate in recruitment and education opportunities in your sport.</li> <li>• Actively contribute to local, regional and national initiatives to improve the standards and quality of coaching both in your sport and sport in general.</li> <li>• Practise in an open and transparent fashion that encourages other coaches to contribute to or learn from your knowledge and experience.</li> <li>• Engage in self-analysis and reflection to identify your professional needs.</li> <li>• Seek CPD opportunities to develop your coaching skills and competencies, and update your knowledge.</li> <li>• Manage your lifestyle and coaching commitments to avoid burnout that might impair your performance.</li> <li>• Do not assume responsibility for any role for which you are not qualified or prepared.</li> <li>• Do not misrepresent your level of qualification.</li> <li>• Promote good coaching practice in others and challenge any poor practice that you become aware of.</li> </ul> |

<sup>1</sup> [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)

## Implementation Issues

It is recognised and identified by the Ethics Review Group that a code of practice in isolation is of minimal value. In order for this code to fully impact on coaching practice and behaviour, it must:

- be incorporated into governing bodies of sport or employer constitutions and governance documents
- be a constituent part of a policy and procedure for dealing with allegations and complaints
- be used as the definitive guide and benchmark measure of coaching practice in determining any need for sanctions against a coach
- be fully incorporated into the coach education processes
- be assessed as part of the coach accreditation process
- be supported by the appropriate training and resources.

sports coach UK has developed a suite of training resources that underpin many of the concepts contained within this Code of Practice for Sports Coaches.

These are:

- *Safeguarding and Protecting Children* (formerly *Good Practice and Child Protection*)
- *Equity in Your Coaching*
- *The Responsible Sports Coach*
- *Coaching and the Law*.

This Code of Practice, developed by sports coach UK, provides a guide for good and safe coaching practice.

sports coach UK will support a governing body of sport in implementing this code of practice.

sports coach UK will ensure that it has professional and ethical values and that all its practices are inclusive and equitable.

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