

PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Introduction:

This briefing is designed ensure all parties are clear about what is acceptable and appropriate contact with children and young people in an athletics setting.

UK Athletics position is that coaches and other volunteers should not make gratuitous or unnecessary physical contact with children and young people. Physical contact during sport should always be intended to meet the child's needs, NOT the adult's. The adult should only use physical contact if their aim is to:

- Develop sports skills or techniques
- To treat an injury
- To prevent an injury or accident from occurring
- To meet the requirements of the sport

Any physical contact considered necessary during athletics training sessions should respect and be sensitive to the needs and wishes of the child and should take place in a culture of dignity and respect.

Children should be reminded that they have the right to say what level of contact they are okay with and should feel that this is always listened to and respected.

Physical contact with young people should never:

- involve touching genital areas, buttocks, breasts or any other part of the body that might cause a child distress or embarrassment.
- take place out of sight of others or in secret.

There may be occasions where a distressed young person may need support and reassurance. A young person may also want to mark a success or achievement with a fist bump, hug, or other gesture. It should also be considered that what an adult may think appropriate in these circumstances may not be shared by a young person. Adults should ensure that such contact does not become (or is not observed as) unwelcome, unnecessary or unjustified, particularly where it occurs repeatedly with the same young person(s) over a period of time.

Demonstrating a Technique:

In athletics, in the first instance, explaining a technique should be done by demonstration, either by the coach or an athlete undertaking the technique safely without contact. Physical support deemed necessary should be provided openly, preferably in the presence of others, and must always be proportionate to the circumstances and the activity.

You must first ask for consent and explain to the child in advance what will happen, and they should be given the chance to opt out.

Supporting a Child with Personal Care Needs:

Volunteers and staff should work with parents/carers and children to agree and develop practised routines for personal care, such as help with getting changed for younger children, so that parents/carers and children know what to expect. Guidance should be sought from the club welfare officer in advance of implementing any personal care plan.

Helpers should not take on the responsibility for tasks for which they are not appropriately trained e.g. manual assistance for a child with a physical disability.

Administering First Aid:

Parents/carers should provide health related details for their child when they join a club to ensure that our sports volunteers/staff are made aware of any pre-existing medical conditions, medicines being taken by participants, or existing injuries and treatment required.

When administering First Aid the child should be told what action is being taken and why.

Only those with a current, recognised first aid qualification should treat injuries and parents/carers should be informed as soon as possible of any injury and action taken.

For further details see the guidance on [First Aid and the Treatment of Injuries](#).

Physical punishment:

Any form of physical punishment of children within sport or physical activity is unlawful, including any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of physical intervention to prevent a young person from harming themselves, others or damaging property.

Clubs:

It is good practice for athletics clubs, as part of an induction process for new members, to explain to parents/carers and their child, or give written guidance, about any physical contact that will be required as part of club activity. Children should be encouraged to voice concerns they have if any physical contact makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened. Clubs should:

- Monitor contact between adults and young people, and ensure it is appropriate.
- Discuss and form guidance about contact between young people together with them.
- Provide an induction for new young members and their parents that covers guidance about any physical contact that will be required as part of the activity.

Sports science and medical roles:

Sports science, medicine and some other roles within sport, may require physical contact in order for tasks to be carried out effectively. These roles should only be undertaken by properly trained and qualified practitioners. A coach or volunteer must never massage an athlete under 18 years of age. This guidance does not seek to replace the specific guidance and codes of practice developed for those professionals; reference should be made to the appropriate body for that discipline.