GUIDANCE NOTES NO:

5.6

PHYSICAL CONTACT AND YOUNG PEOPLE: GUIDANCE FOR GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL

FOR ALL

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The FA

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The following guidance document has been produced for long-term use and is not tailored to the changeable restrictions in place as a result of the current Covid-19 pandemic. For example, references are made to appropriate forms of physical contact most of which, under current Government guidelines, are prohibited. Accordingly, during this time, clubs should also refer to current Government guidance and The FA guidance on return to grassroots football and construe the below documents in light of that guidance. You can find out more **here**.

Adults running football need to understand when it's appropriate to have direct physical contact with a child and have the confidence to know that their actions cannot be misinterpreted.

Children have a right to say what level of contact they are comfortable with and have their views respected.

Parents/carers need to feel confident that any contact between children and those individuals running football activities is safe and appropriate.

We have therefore developed this guidance, to assist clubs and those involved in grassroots football to understand when and how physical contact with children may take place. We expect clubs to ensure that all participants are aware of this guidance and the behaviours that should be exhibited.

PHYSICAL CONTACT BETWEEN ADULTS AND CHILDREN IN FOOTBALL MUST ONLY TAKE PLACE TO:

- Develop sports skills or techniques;
- Allow treatment of an injury, or urgent first aid treatment in an emergency, by a designated first aider or qualified practitioner where required;
- Prevent harm e.g. an injury or accident occurring;
- Meet the requirements of the sport; and/or
- Where appropriate, comfort a distressed child or to celebrate their success.

The following key principles for physical contact should be adhered to at all times:

- It must take place in the interests of and for the benefit of the child, not the adult involved.
- Adults need to explain to the child the type of, and reason for, physical contact.
- Unless it's an emergency, the adult should ask the child for permission; for example, to aid the demonstration of a specific football technique.
- Children must be encouraged to voice their concerns if any actual or proposed physical contact makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened.
- Unless specifically and essentially required for emergency first aid care, contact must not involve touching genital areas, buttocks, breasts or any other part of the body that might cause a child distress or embarrassment.
- It must never be used as a punishment.
- It should always take place in an open or public environment and not take place in secret or out of sight of others. Where essential treatment or emergency first aid provided by the designated first aider takes place away from the rest of the group for confidentiality and privacy reasons, at all times the first aider should ensure another responsible adult is present for the duration.
- It should be culturally sensitive.
- It should respect any Government guidance on infection control in light of Covid-19 or other infectious diseases.

Clubs should provide guidance for young members and their parents/carers regarding any physical contact that will be required by club officials as part of that activity, as well as details of who to contact should they have concerns. Club introductory information and/or inductions also need to address physical contact.

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DEAF AND DISABLED CHILDREN

For additional guidance on including and safeguarding deaf and disabled children please refer to FA Guidance Notes 7.2, which are available **here**.

DIRECT CONTACT WHEN COACHING

Generally physical contact is not required when coaching football, however there may be some circumstances where an activity/ practice requires coaches to come into physical contact with children. For example, i) teaching a player how to use a piece of equipment or demonstrating a skill or exercise during a coaching session in order to reduce the risk of injury when playing, or ii) when working with certain impairment groups, such as people who are blind, where coaches may need to guide players and help orientate them with the surroundings. Coaches must be aware of the limits within which contact should properly take place, and of the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted. As noted above, coaches should explain the type of, and reason for, physical contact and children should be encouraged to voice their concerns if they feel uncomfortable or threatened.

OFFERING COMFORT AND/OR CELEBRATING SUCCESS

There may be occasions where a distressed child needs comfort and reassurance which may include physical comforting such as a caring parent would give. A young person may also want to mark a success or achievement with a hug or other gesture. Adults should use their discretion in such cases to ensure that their actions (and what is seen by others present) are appropriate for the child and does not become inappropriate or unjustified contact, particularly with the same young person over a period of time. Contact that an adult may feel is appropriate may be unwanted or uncomfortable to a young person.

SPORTS SCIENCE AND MEDICAL ROLES

Physical contact is often a requirement of the role of sports scientists and medics. As such these tasks should only be undertaken by properly trained or qualified practitioners.

Qualified practitioners should conduct and record any treatment in the way that is specified by their own professional body including the appropriate secure storage of confidential medical records.

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 and individuals must follow the relevant code of conduct.

The FA wishes to acknowledge that it has incorporated guidance provided by the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit in developing this safer working practice guidance. This guidance is not intended to replace or supersede any guidance from the NSPCC, Child Protection in Sport Unit.

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