

# Code of Practice for Sports Coaches

Rights, Relationships and Responsibilities



## Code of Practice for Sports Coaches

We know that coaching encourages people to start in sport and physical activity, improves enjoyment, maintains engagement, improves fitness, develops skills and builds lifelong connections to sport and activity. This means that coaches, leaders and instructors play a critical role in the development of any sport or activity, and in the lives of the people they coach. Good coaches ensure participants have positive experiences, so they are more likely to continue and achieve their potential.

Coaches must demonstrate a high degree of honesty, integrity and competence. The need for coaches to understand and act on their responsibilities is vital to sport, as is the need to promote participation for fun and enjoyment, as well as achievement. This is implicit in good coaching practice and promotes a professional image. This *Code of Practice for Sports Coaches* defines all that is best in coaching practice.

*Someone engaged in coaching may do so under the title of activator, coach, instructor, teacher or leader. Regardless of the badge they wear, this Code applies to all those who help others achieve their goals through sport and physical activity.*



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### Good coaching practice reflects the following key principles:

#### Rights

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

#### Relationships

Coaches must develop a relationship with their participants (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 participants, coaches must attain an appropriate level of competence through qualifications, and a commitment to ongoing training to ensure safe and correct practice.



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Principle	Statement	Issues	Actions
Rights	Coaches must respect and champion the rights of every individual to participate in sport and physical activity	Coaches should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• create an environment where everyone has the opportunity to participate in their chosen sport or activity</li> <li>• maintain an environment free of fear and harassment</li> <li>• recognise the rights of all participants to be treated as individuals</li> <li>• recognise the rights of participants to seek advice from other coaches and experts</li> <li>• promote the concept of a balanced lifestyle, supporting the well-being of participants in and out of the sport.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treat all individuals 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 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 participants, coaches or any other individuals.</li> <li>• Communicate with and provide feedback to participants in a way that reflects respect and care.</li> </ul>

Principle	Statement	Issues	Actions
Relationships	Coaches must develop a relationship with their participants (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 participants</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 or vulnerable adult</li> <li>• should empower participants to be responsible for their own decisions</li> <li>• should clarify the nature of the coaching services being offered</li> <li>• should communicate and cooperate with other organisations and individuals in the best interests of participants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of the physical needs of participants (especially at 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 participant's full consent and approval.</li> <li>• Do not engage in any form of sexually related contact or activity with any participant for whom you have responsibility. This extends to sexual innuendo, flirting or inappropriate gestures and terms. Coaches are in a position of power and trust in relation to participants. By entering into an intimate/sexual relationship with a participant, a coach may be deemed guilty of abusing this position and, in relation to children and young people, this may 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, and follow them.</li> <li>• Follow the reporting procedures laid down by your club or employer if you have a concern – non-action is unacceptable.</li> <li>• Arrange to transfer a participant 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 participant.</li> <li>• Respect participants' opinions when making decisions about their participation in their sport.</li> <li>• Encourage participants to take responsibility for their own development and actions.</li> <li>• Allow participants to discuss and participate in the decision-making process.</li> <li>• Discuss and agree with participants what information is confidential.</li> <li>• Inform participants or their parents/guardians of the requirements of the sport or activity.</li> <li>• Inform participants or their parents/guardians of any potential costs involved in accessing the coaching services on offer.</li> <li>• Be aware of and communicate any conflict of interest as soon as it becomes apparent.</li> <li>• Do not work with any other coach's participant without first discussing or reaching agreement with both coach and participant.</li> <li>• Identify and agree with participants which other experts or organisations could offer appropriate services.</li> </ul>

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 participants and others in their sport</li> <li>• should project an image of health, personal hygiene and functional efficiency</li> <li>• must be positive role models for participants at all times.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operate within the rules and the spirit of your sport or activity.</li> <li>• Educate participants on issues relating to the use of performance-enhancing drugs in sport and cooperate fully with UK Anti-Doping, UK Sport and governing body policies.</li> <li>• Maintain the same level of interest and support when a participant is sick or injured.</li> <li>• Display high standards in use of language, manner, punctuality, preparation and presentation.</li> <li>• Encourage participants to display the same qualities.</li> <li>• Do not smoke, drink alcohol or use recreational drugs before or while coaching. This gives a negative image and could compromise safety.</li> <li>• Display control, respect, dignity and professionalism to all involved in your sport or activity.</li> </ul>
Responsibilities – professional standards	To maximise the benefits and minimise the risks to participants, coaches must attain an appropriate level of competence through qualifications, and a commitment to ongoing training to ensure safe and correct practice	Coaches should: <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 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 participants</li> <li>• actively promote the positive benefits to society of participation in sport and activity, including the contribution it makes to achieving improved health, well-being and educational outcomes for children and young people</li> <li>• contribute to the development of coaching by exchanging knowledge and ideas with others, and by working in partnership with other agencies and professionals</li> <li>• gain 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 participants and are progressive and appropriate.</li> <li>• Maintain appropriate records of your participants' progress.</li> <li>• Recognise and accept when it is appropriate to refer a participant to another coach or specialist.</li> <li>• Seek to achieve the highest appropriate level of qualification available.</li> <li>• Seek continuing personal development (CPD) opportunities to develop your coaching skills and competencies, and update your knowledge.</li> <li>• Be aware of relevant 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>• Work in an open and transparent way that encourages other coaches to contribute to or learn from your knowledge and experience.</li> <li>• Use self-analysis and reflection to identify your developmental needs.</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 you observe.</li> </ul>



## Implementation Issues

This *Code of Practice for Sports Coaches* provides a guide for good and safe coaching practice, but a code in isolation is of minimal value. For the code to impact on coaching practice and behaviour it must:

- be incorporated into governing body of sport and employer constitutions and governance documents
- be incorporated into coach education and development processes
- be assessed as part of the coach accreditation process
- be part of the policy and procedure for dealing with allegations and complaints
- be used as the benchmark of good practice in determining the need for sanctions
- be supported by the appropriate training and resources.

sports coach UK has developed a suite of training resources and eLearning modules that underpin many of the concepts in this *Code of Practice for Sports Coaches*.

These include:

- Safeguarding and Protecting Children
- Keeping Safe in Sport: Safeguarding for Young Volunteers
- Equity in Your Coaching
- How to Coach Disabled People in Sport
- Coach Clean (produced with UK Anti-Doping).

For full details, please visit [www.sportscoachuk.org](http://www.sportscoachuk.org)

In addition, we have a long-term campaign to encourage more women into coaching. Find out more at [www.reachintocoaching.co.uk](http://www.reachintocoaching.co.uk)



## Our Vision

Putting coaching at the heart of sport.

## Our Mission

To drive the development of sports coaching in the UK.

## Strategic Objectives

To achieve our mission, we will:

- 1 champion and drive **policy and investment** in coaching
- 2 support and challenge our Partners to improve their **coaching systems** in order to achieve their objectives
- 3 provide **products and services** to support our Partners and their coaches
- 4 provide **research** and share **good practice** that will benefit coaching
- 5 ensure an effective UK coaching agency through quality **leadership**, good governance and a **skilled team**.

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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