



Child Protection in Sport Unit

What sports clubs can do

Here, we list positive actions that sports organisations and clubs can take to encourage parents to support their children in a manner that's of benefit to everyone.

However, you may face situations where you need to deal more directly with problematic spectator behaviour, even to the point of sanctions.

Encourage positive parental participation

Parents play a pivotal role in sport. There are a number of ways that clubs and coaches can encourage their involvement in a way that benefits their child, as well as the rest of the team or organisation. To get parents on board, you can:

- provide information about the club's ethos, rules and expectations
- let parents know who to contact for information, feedback and offers of support
- communicate clear expectations of parents (including online behaviour), which they are required to sign up to – for example, a parents' code of conduct
- inform parents about the expectations of coaches and participants
- develop relationships with parents to encourage their positive involvement and make use of their skills to support the club
- inform parents about processes to raise, discuss or report concerns or issues about which they're unhappy
- use a range of means to inform parents and young people about expected standards of behaviour, including induction information, meetings, and leaflets, **posters** and newsletters
- provide reminders to parents that they are role models for the children
- communicate the message that sport is fun



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Manage challenging parental behaviour

In order to address concerns that may arise, clubs should:

- promote the club's code of conduct for parents, so they know what behaviour is expected of them and the consequences of breaching this – and get this signed
- establish a well-publicised process to investigate and respond to concerns or complaints
- promote values such as respect and listening to each other throughout the club
- explain to parents why certain behaviour is unhelpful
- encourage parental encouragement as opposed to criticism
- model positive behaviour by coaches and officials within the club, such as encouraging fair play and applauding opponents
- increase the distance between spectators and the pitch or court
- provide information for children and parents about who they can talk to if they have concerns
- have a designated safeguarding person other than the coach or referee
- provide support for the officials through assistants – this is particularly important in the case of young officials
- take advantage of support from the sport's governing body

Establish sanctions for parents

Sanctions should be identified and agreed by the management committee, and communicated to all parties. If poor behaviour persists, sanctions may include:

- monitoring behaviour by a club official, or welfare or safeguarding officer
- not allowing an individual to be court, pool or pitch-side during a match or matches
- barring an individual from attending at all – preferably by making alternative arrangements for their child to get to and from the club or venue

Every effort should be made to ensure that the behaviour of a parent does not result in their child being unable to participate, although in some extreme cases this may be the final resort.

One coach said:

"My policy is that there's nothing wrong with shouting encouragement from the side-lines, but if there are any negative comments, that spectator is asked to leave."