

Section 3 – Policies and procedures

3.1.2 - Code of conduct for people working with children

Children and young people are able to play tennis because of the thousands of adults, both paid and unpaid, who provide opportunities for them to do so. All of these adults have special responsibilities to the children they work with. This code of conduct provides clear guidance on the types of practice that will meet these responsibilities. Good conduct not only prevents incidents and allegations, but also helps to highlight any conduct (by other people) that is unsafe or unprofessional.

This code of conduct can be adopted or used by any tennis organisation. It can also be adapted to suit specific roles and situations. The LTA Child Protection Department offers advice on this. Some people, such as LTA Licensed Coaches and ABTO recognised tennis officials, are already required to follow codes of conduct applying to their positions.

Those working with children in tennis should:

1. Be professional and maintain the highest standards of personal behaviour at all times.
2. Recognise the trust placed in adults by children, and recognise the power held over children by adults. Treat this trust and this power with the highest responsibility.
3. Try to work in an open and accountable manner at all times. Work in view of others wherever possible, be wary of working alone and unobserved, and be willing to accept questions or criticism regarding good practice.
4. Expect others to work in an open and accountable manner. Question and criticise the practice of others if necessary.
5. Maintain a professional relationship with children. Any form of sexual relationship or activity with a child is unacceptable and could lead to disciplinary or legal action.
6. Not be under the influence of drink, drugs or any illegal substance.
7. Use appropriate and respectful forms of discipline and communication. Physical aggression, intimidation, verbal abuse and persistent shouting are not acceptable. Any form of assault (e.g. hitting, kicking, pinching, slapping) should be regarded as a serious incident.
8. Use appropriate language. Don't swear, and never make sexual or suggestive comments to a child. If a child makes such comments, be prepared to enforce these boundaries in your response.
9. Not appear to favour one child or show interest in one child more than another.
10. Not discriminate against a child because of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious belief or sexual identity.
11. Use physical contact with players only where necessary. If contact is necessary, (e.g. for the purposes of coaching or first-aid), then explain to the child what the contact is for, and change your approach if he or she appears uncomfortable.

12. Design and use training methods and training programmes that are appropriate to the individual child.
13. Be aware of situations that could be misunderstood or manipulated by other adults. For example, if a coach or official is alone with a child in a clubhouse, changing room or car, he or she may be vulnerable to allegations of misconduct.
14. Be vigilant and aware of how actions can be misinterpreted by children. Actions made with good intentions can seem intrusive or intimidating to some children. Sometimes children become attracted to the adults working with them. Adults should be aware of the impact of their actions, and should sensitively address any misunderstanding.

If a concern about a child's welfare comes to your attention:

15. Take seriously any suspicion or allegation of abuse, or any disclosure of concern made by a child (or adult).
16. If a concern comes to your attention, record information, including relevant details. Be sure to record opinions or feelings as such; do not record them as facts. Do not question or interview the people involved in the incident of concern.
17. Report any concerns within the area of Child Protection (physical, emotional or sexual abuse, neglect or bullying), in confidence and without delay, to your club, county or LTA Child Protection Officer. If CPOs cannot be contacted and there appears to be an immediate risk, contact the police or your local social services.
18. Never discuss an allegation or suspicion with another person, (other than the police or social services), before receiving advice from the club, county or LTA Child Protection Officer.

Remember that it is the responsibility of all adults to safeguard children in sport. By recognising, following and discussing the principles behind this code, you are helping to make bad practice and abuse unwelcome in tennis.

For more information on issues like these, see the range of guidance resources produced by the LTA Child Protection Department. Go to www.lta.org.uk/childprotection, or contact the department directly using the details below.

LTA Child Protection

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www.LTA.org.uk/childprotection

