

Child Protection in Sport Unit

Briefing paper 02/06

Guidelines on Staffing/Supervision Ratios For Children/Young People's Activities

It is important to ensure that, in planning and running sports activities for children and young people, consideration is given to providing an appropriate staffing/supervision ratio of adults to participants. This will minimise any risks to participants, enhance the benefits they draw from the activity, reassure carers, and provide some protection for those responsible for providing the activity in the event of concerns or incidents arising.

Due to the number of potential variables, it is not possible to recommend "one size fits all" guidance to cover all activities involving children and young people. There are, however, a number of **key principles** that should underpin good practice that we would recommend:

- It is the responsibility of those commissioning, planning or providing sessions/activities to ensure that those running the activity are suitable to do so. For example:
 - they have undertaken an appropriate recruitment and selection process, including a recent enhanced level CRB check
 - they have insurance appropriate to the activity
 - they have adopted codes of conduct
 - they have an appropriate qualification for the activity
 - they understand their responsibility to safeguard children
- In a number of sports under 18's can receive coaching or officiating awards. This creates opportunities for these young people to develop their coaching or technical skills and sense of responsibility. However, this should not result in these young people being given full or lead responsibility for managing groups of children. Under 18 coaches or officials should only supplement those appropriate adults with responsibility for supervising the activity. The organisation's duty of care and safeguarding policy extend to all under 18s, whether they are participants, coaches or officials.
- Whatever the recommended ratio of adults to participants is, a minimum of two adults should be present. This ensures at least basic cover in the event of something impacting on the availability of one of the adults during the activity (in the event of a participants requiring the attention of an adult during the activity following an accident for example).
- In the planning of all activities, and regardless of any other assessments that may be required (for example of equipment or for Health and Safety purposes), a risk assessment should be undertaken which specifically informs decision-making about appropriate supervision levels.

- Key factors to assess include:
 - Age of children
 - Additional supervision/support needs of some or all participants (for example due to disability)
 - Competence/experience of participants for the specific activity
 - Nature of activity (for example climbing or swimming sessions may require higher levels of supervision than an aerobics class)
 - Nature of venue (whether closed and exclusive, or open and accessible to members of the public)

Many sports governing bodies have issued guidance on minimum supervision ratios (and a range of other factors linked to the welfare and safety of participants) – these should be adhered to as minimum standards

Recommended Minimum Supervision Ratios

While the risk assessment may well indicate the need for an enhanced level of supervision and staffing for a particular activity, the CPSU suggests that the following guidelines are considered as minimum requirements:

Children under 8 years old:

- One adult to eight participants (with a minimum of two adults)
- This is based on the government's guidance for the provision of out of school care for children under eight years old. (*Out of School Care: Guidance to the National Standards, OFSTED 2001*)
- Children over 8 years old:
- One adult to ten participants (with a minimum of two adults)

Parents and Carers

Although the CPSU encourages parents/carers to accompany children to activities, we do not recommend those planning or providing activities include carers in supervision calculations, unless the carers/parents are acting in a formal volunteering or other capacity during the activity. In these circumstances, this should mean that those parents/carers meet all appropriate requirements in terms of:

- appropriate recruitment checks
- clarity about their role
- understanding who has overall responsibility for the group
- understanding relevant good practice guidance/codes of conduct.