

Mixed age events LTA Guidance Version 1.1.22.03.18

Mixed aged activities involve players under the age of 18 competing with or against adults, or with or against children of different ages. Event organisers have a responsibility to promote the safety and welfare of players, and this extends to assessing the potential risks associated with mixed-aged events.

Key issues to consider and address

Regardless of a young person's size or ability, their status and potential vulnerability as a young person must be taken into account. As well as more obvious factors such as the physical implications of mixed age participation, there are a number of other specific issues (outlined below) that need to be taken into account with mixed aged events. These should be discussed and agreed with the player, their parents/carers and the event organiser before the event. We recommend having a written agreement covering all arrangements to be shared with all involved.

Physical safety

- An assessment of the possible risks to a young person in engaging in the activity with older players should be undertaken.
- It is not appropriate or safe to make judgments based solely on a young person's age. Rates of both physical and emotional development can result in significant differences. For example, the size, maturity and technical competence of one fourteen-year-old may be substantially different to another fourteen-year-old.
- While some young people may be able to compete physically/technically with older players, they may struggle with other aspects of involvement (e.g., the way in which the competitive ethos is expressed or demonstrated by adults, particularly in defeat; adult humour and language; social aspects of the sport; etc) in a way that adults may not.

Supervision

- Ensure that adequate arrangements have been made for the young person to be supervised by an appropriate adult before, during and after the event – including free time.
- Adults who are supervising children on a trip should at all times be aware of their responsibilities in environments where alcohol is present
- Children should not be allowed to consume alcohol under any circumstances

Changing/showering arrangements

Arrangements should cater for the needs of a single young person amongst a larger group of adults

- It may be necessary to consider gender neutral facilities or separate changing/showering arrangements for young people – this could include them using the same facilities but at slightly different times to the adults, or allowing them to change and shower at home.
- Many young people are particularly sensitive about undressing or showering in front of others, regardless of whether they make this known or not.
- If a child feels uncomfortable changing or showering in front of others, no pressure should be placed on them to do so.

Travel and sleeping arrangements

- When events are held away from the club, or involve overnight stays, arrangements need to be made to ensure the well-being of the young person

Codes of Conduct

- All participants, coaches and staff should understand the implications of young people being involved in the activity
- All adults and young people should sign up to relevant codes of conduct that cover issues like appropriate language, behaviour (e.g., alcohol, smoking, relationships between young people and adults or other young people etc.) – see Section B for more information on this

Raising a concern

- Everyone involved in the event should be aware how to raise a concern or complaint and to whom
- This should include contact details for someone with safeguarding responsibilities and access to external contacts, such as LTA Safeguarding Team (0208 487 7000, Monday – Friday) and NSPCC (0808 800 5000, 24/7 access)