

Supervision of Children in Bowls

The sport of bowls welcomes the participation of children – they are the future of the sport. Safe participation by children is the key to them enjoying bowls and continuing to play. Parents/carers are encouraged to attend with children to support their safe participation and enjoyment of bowls.

The law states that someone is a child up to their 18th birthday.

Correct supervision is part of an organisation's duty of care to safeguard and protect children. It will: -

- minimise any risks to participants
- enhance the benefits children draw from the activity
- help deliver the activity safely
- ensure there is enough appropriate adult support should any issues arise
- reassure parents/carers

Children at Bowls roll ups or matches

An individual child attending a bowls event such as a roll up or match which is not age specific, as a player, volunteer or spectator, should be accompanied by an appropriate adult such as their parent, another responsible adult or carer. If a parent/carer wishes to leave their child, they can identify another suitable adult who is staying, with their agreement, as being responsible for their child. They should ensure their own contact details are left with an appropriate club member such as a team captain or coach who is present at the session or match.

The law does not say an age when you can leave a child on their own, but it's an offence to leave a child alone if it places them at risk. The NSPCC says children under 12 are rarely mature enough to be left alone for a long period of time. [The law on leaving your child on their own - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/leaving-a-child-alone)

It is therefore recommended that children under the age of 12 are supervised by their parent/carer or other identified adult whilst at a bowls venue and outside of any venue sessions, such as breaks in coaching lessons or matches. An older child could be left at a session with prior written agreement between parents/carers and relevant club officials. A club can refuse to provide this supervision if it does not have the appropriate DBS checked volunteers.

A parental consent template is available on the BDA website and National Governing Bodies may have similar. The club official, in agreeing, will need to ensure that adult to child supervision ratios will be maintained (see Table 1 below). In all cases, at least two adult participants, coaches or other volunteers should be present at the activity.

Bowls events for or including children

The guidance below relates to bowls events and activities planned specifically for children plus mixed age coaching sessions.

It is not possible to recommend ‘one size fits all’ guidance to cover all activities involving children. There are, however, many key considerations that are recommended by the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) as good practice.

What makes an individual suitable to supervise children?

It is the responsibility of bowls clubs and organisations, planning, or providing sessions and activities for or including children, to ensure the suitability of those running the activity. This includes:

- coaches being appropriately qualified for their role
- the activity being subject to a safe recruitment process, for coaches and other volunteers including criminal records checks for eligible roles
- coaches having insurance appropriate to the activity
- coaches and volunteers signing up to comply with a code of conduct which highlights their responsibility to safeguard children

Risk assessment of bowls activities involving children

In the planning of all activities, and regardless of any other assessments that may be required (for health and safety purposes, for example), a risk assessment should be undertaken that specifically informs decision making about appropriate supervision levels.

Key factors to include in a risk assessment

- numbers and ages of the children,
- whether parents/carers or another appropriate adult is required to stay for the duration of the session – will the age of the child mean this is different for different children or not?
- length of time of the event/activity and whether there are any planned breaks,
- supervision arrangements during any breaks,
- additional supervision and support needs of some or all participants (for example, due to disability or age),
- as far as possible, include input from children and their parents in risk assessments to ensure the children’s needs are met,
- nature of the club’s or venue’s public liability insurance,
- competence and experience of the staff involved including at least one trained first aider,
- competence and experience of participants for the specific nature of the activity,
- nature of the venue – whether closed (such as an indoor bowls centre) or open (public bowling green),

- whether private and exclusive to the group or open and accessible to the public,
- what types of equipment children may use,
- adult volunteers who do not meet the criteria for vetting and barring checks are supervised at all times.

Recommended minimum supervision ratios

Whatever the recommended ratio of adults to participants is, a minimum of 2 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 (such as in the event of one participant requiring the attention of an adult during the activity following an accident).

The adults should cover the genders of the child participants. If this is a drop-in session where participants are not known in advance, there should be at least one female and one male adult supervisor.

While your risk assessment may well indicate the need for an enhanced level of supervision and staffing for a particular activity, table 1 shows recommended adult-to-child ratios which would be suitable for most bowls activities/events involving children.

Table 1 – minimum supervision ratios

Age of children	Number of adults	Number of children
0 - 3	1	3
4 - 8	1	6
9 - 11	1	8
12 - 18	1	10

Toilet supervision

If the group has both boys and girls there should be at least one male and one female responsible adult supervising visits to the toilet. Adults who have not previously volunteered and have not had the necessary vetting checks should not be left alone with children or take them to the toilet unaccompanied.

In larger groups of children, encourage groups to take a comfort break together with one responsible adult while the other adult(s) supervise the remaining children.

Parents as supervisors

Bowls clubs should encourage parents to accompany children to activities – particularly those aged 16 or under. However, it is not recommended that those planning or providing activities, include parents in supervision calculations, unless the parents are acting in a formal volunteering or other capacity during the activity. In these circumstances, this should mean that those parents meet all appropriate requirements in terms of:

- clarity about their role,

- appropriate background checks suitable to their role,
- undertaking relevant safeguarding children training,
- who has overall responsibility for the group,
- what is acceptable practice.

Young people as supervisors

Bowls should provide opportunities for under-18s to coach, officiate, volunteer, or organise events for other children, including achieving qualifications and awards. These opportunities allow young people to develop skills, experience and confidence. However, this should not mean that clubs or organisations should depend on them to take full responsibility for managing groups of children.

Under-18s in coaching or other roles should only be in a supporting role to the adult with overall responsibility for supervising the activity. Therefore, they must not be counted as an adult when calculating supervision ratios.

Transporting children

Coaches and other club staff/volunteers are not responsible for transporting children to and from bowls events, unless as part of a club organised trip such as an away fixture. (Further guidance is provided for these circumstances in other guidelines on the BDA website and via the CPSU link below).

[Guidance on transporting a child or young person in your car \(thecpsu.org.uk\)](http://thecpsu.org.uk)

It is reasonable for clubs and coaches to place responsibility on parents for ensuring appropriate transport arrangements are made for their children. Parents may choose to make private arrangements with another adult (such as a family friend) to transport their child, however, they should let the club know. Parents should also be advised of the importance of punctuality in arrival for the event and collection of their children, if they are being left in the care of event staff or volunteers.

Other Related Guidance

Useful detailed CPSU guidance on related issues is below:

[Involving young people in mixed aged sport/activity | CPSU \(thecpsu.org.uk\)](http://thecpsu.org.uk)

[Working with young people in a drop-in environment | CPSU \(thecpsu.org.uk\)](http://thecpsu.org.uk)