

## Physical Contact in Bowls – Guidance for Coaches

Everyone involved in bowls should have the best experience possible, but at the same time, everyone should be safe. Coaches should keep in mind the following common-sense tips in relation to physical contact.

It is recognised that physical contact between a child or adult at risk and another adult may be required to instruct, encourage, protect or comfort.

England is a multi-cultural society comprising people from many different ethnic and religious backgrounds. We may also have participants who may be on the Child Protection Register or have previously been or are currently being abused at home. Not everyone is used to or is comfortable with any type of touching be it friendly or otherwise. People may be uncomfortable about being touched by strangers or people of the opposite gender. Coaches need to be aware that touching may cause discomfort or embarrassment and need to show consideration.

In bowls, there may be times where a coach may need to touch the player to assist in a certain task, to help with their technique or to celebrate. If anyone is uncomfortable with physical contact, it should be made clear that they can make their feelings known privately to the adult.

All touching should be done for a positive reason. As a responsible adult, you should only use physical contact if its aim is to:

- Develop sports skills or techniques
- Treat an injury
- Prevent an injury or accident from occurring
- Meet the requirements of the sport

Coaches should seek to explain the reason for the physical contact to the child or adult at risk i.e. to reinforce a point or to coach a specific skill. Unless the situation is an emergency, the coach should ask the child or adult at risk for permission to touch them. Physical contact should always be intended to meet the individuals need NOT the adults. The following guidelines should be adhered to:

- If a child or adult at risk becomes injured during a coaching session and the injury requires the individual to be carried to a place of treatment, always seek support from another adult before moving the individual. Any first aid administered should be in the presence of another adult or in open view of others
- If the child or adult at risk seems uncomfortable in any way with the physical contact, stop immediately
- If the child or adult at risk you are working with is visually impaired, you should tell them who you are and ask their permission before you come into physical contact with them. You should also explain what you are about to do.

- Where physical contact is for motivational or celebratory reason, agree with the children, teachers, parents, adults' carers or other appropriate adults that to praise good performance, a "high five" or similar action will be used
- Never help a child or adult to dress unless they request this and genuinely require assistance

**In simple terms, coaches should ask themselves -  
'is the physical contact necessary and justified?'**

There is useful guidance for coaches and others on the Child Protection in Sport Unit website including a helpful video clip.

[Physical contact and young people in sport | CPSU \(thecpsu.org.uk\)](https://www.thecpsu.org.uk)