

How to build a sports club culture where children and young people:

- ✓ have fun
- ✓ feel included
- ✓ learn new skills
- ✓ are physically active

Parents, staff and volunteers must:

- understand what you say and do impacts on children's experience of sport and ongoing involvement in sport
- address issues that cause children to lose confidence in their skills and self, and make them feel judged and undervalued
- create a welcoming place and space for every child, and keep a balance between participation and competition.

The Commissioner asked 1,570 young people what they thought about sport. This is what they said...

The best things about sport



- Having fun with friends and meeting new people.
- Being part of a team and a community and belonging.
- Feeling energised, fit, strong and free from stress.
- Healthy competition and learning how to win and lose.
- Building strong values and developing 'life skills'.

What makes it difficult for children and young people to get involved and stay involved in sport?



- Pressure to balance sport with other priorities, responsibilities or interests at school, home, work or socially.
- Bullying and exclusion based on skills and ability, age, size, gender, sexuality, race, or cultural background.
- Pressure from coaches, parents, or peers.
- Significant costs including transport, clothing, and equipment costs.

What would help more children and young people play sport?



- Doing more to ensure sporting environments are fun and inclusive for everyone.
- Offering more flexible scheduling and expectations and understanding young people's lives at home, school, work and socially.
- Reducing, or in some cases removing the costs of participating in sport.
- Engaging with young people directly by listening to them, and being willing to adapt expectations, policies or practices accordingly.

There are some easy steps that Sports Clubs can take to become Child Friendly. This guide provides some ideas of what these are. To read the full *More than a Game* report click [here](#).





To improve performance of your Club's Coaches you could introduce an Annual Coach Survey.

To ensure you get the best responses from Club Members conduct an Annual Coach Survey of all junior and senior players that is anonymously completed.

The survey questions could include the following:

- Is there something you wish I knew that would make me a better coach?
- Is there a habit I need to work on?
- Is there something I did that really worked for you?
- Is there one thing I could do to be a great coach?



To understand players and their motivations for playing you could undertake an "Off Season Club Chat" with your junior players.

The questions you could ask players could include the following:

- What do you like about the Club?
- What don't you like about the Club?
- What do you want to get out of playing with the Club next season?
- What ideas do you have that you think will improve the Club?



To be inclusive and positive you could review your awards and presentations process on an annual basis.

Consider asking the following questions of your organising committee, which includes younger members.

The review could include the following questions:

- Do presentation nights build motivation to be involved for the love of sport, or are they focused more on achieving a reward?
- Do award categories and their associated medals and trophies build inclusiveness and value participation, as well as reward those club members who have demonstrated high levels of skill?
- Do presentation nights build a positive club culture that includes fostering inclusiveness, belonging and being welcoming to all?
- Do the range of awards reinforce a balance between skills and attitudes to help build a positive club culture?



To foster inclusiveness, belonging and being welcoming to all you could...

- check how easy to understand and child friendly incident reporting systems are
- review how well previous incidents have been processed and what follow-up actions have been taken
- ask children what they think about the club uniform and whether there are any changes to make it more inclusive and comfortable for all shapes and ages
- keep supplies of menstrual hygiene products at the Club in kit bags and bathroom facilities with dedicated disposal units
- support the development of friendships through social activities that are organised outside of sport commitments and which keep kids connected during the off-season
- display signs, notices, and symbols of inclusivity at the Club and adopt language and practices in written and verbal communications; and
- install a "non-sports" noticeboard that displays information for children and their parents and carers about services and supports for issues that may be of concern to them such as bullying, depression, eating disorders, mental health, suicide prevention, and volunteering opportunities.



To be more affordable for a diversity of families you could...

- audit the cost of each game day on an annual basis to increase the understanding of all associated and ancillary costs that may be incurred by Club Members
- map costs against a range of family incomes to identify who would be experiencing financial barriers to their child or children's ongoing participation and devise avenues for support
- aim to tackle cost barriers and help families experiencing financial pressures and by making these avenues for support known in discreet and respectful ways
- reduce pressure on families by reviewing the uniform policy, club fundraising expectations and transport assistance options; and
- proactively offer payment plans, bursaries, and fee relief to those families who may need it.



To encourage open communication you could...

- install suggestion boxes, ensuring these are regularly checked and suggestions responded to
- conduct an annual survey of Club members (junior and senior) to get a 'pulse check' on what is and isn't working well from their point of view, including ideas they may have on what could be improved and how
- establish a volunteer safety officer position who children can talk to if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable on game days
- implement a buddy system for new and younger club members
- offer young people diverse volunteering roles in the Club that go beyond umpiring; and
- implement a **Game Day Code of Conduct** for coaches, and parents and carers, to ensure all players, coaches and umpires are respected and positively supported at all times.

The Commissioner's Role

The South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People is an independent statutory position, established under the Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016 (*the Act*).

The Commissioner's role includes advocating for systemic change to policies, programs and practices that impact the rights, development and wellbeing of South Australia's children and young people.

This work is informed by the experiences and issues of children and young people themselves, with a specific focus on those who struggle to have their voices heard.

The Commissioner's strategic agenda was formulated with direct input from children and young people. In particular children and young people asked the Commissioner to facilitate their involvement in decision making and to create opportunities for them to experience authentic participation in the adult world.

The Commissioner is working with a number of partners on this agenda including ways in which children and young people can have input into the design and delivery of policies, processes and practices that relate to delivery of services aimed directly at them.