

MEETINGS

Guidance for conducting meetings with children and parents/carers.

When holding meetings around specific issues relating to the child, it is important to concentrate on the child's positives and NOT their negatives. There will be a need to address any negatives but keep them in perspective and lessen the impact by talking about the positive things about the child or young person.

Make sure that the place you hold the meeting is in a 'child friendly' environment as well as being child focused. Be mindful of the need for confidentiality and choose a suitable location. The meeting may take place with or without the Club Welfare Officer (the format needs to be agreed with the CWO before hand). It is important to have a written record of the meeting (you can use the template) for further meetings or for reviewing the situation.

Who is in the meeting and why?

Decide who should be at the meeting and why their contribution is important – such as the Head Coach, Team Manager, and Assistant Coach. It is advisable not to have too many 'officials' which might seem intimidating to the child and or parents/carers.

What is the reason for the meeting?

Begin the meeting by thanking everyone for taking the time to attend. Set out very clearly at the beginning of the meeting the reason why the meeting has been called. This will help to keep the discussion focused on the issues to be addressed and prevent it progressing on to other issues or other players. If other issues are raised, then they can be addressed at another meeting if appropriate or directed to the relevant people. If the parent or child informs you of something that is pertinent then you may need to reschedule the meeting to allow you to make further enquiries. Explain to the child and parent how you intend to proceed and give some indication of when you expect to be able to reschedule the meeting.

Does everyone understand the purpose of the meeting and what you hope to achieve?

This is where you can explain the seriousness of the reason for the meeting or explain that it is a meeting to address a general attitude etc. before it gets to a serious issue. Clearly state any concerns or issues that you wish to discuss and do not introduce other things at a later point in the meeting. It is important that all are focused on the issue in hand.

Do all parties accept these are genuine issues/concerns?

If the child or parent does not see your concerns as genuine then you may not be able to progress much further with a discussion. It may be that you need to inform the parent and child that you will need to refer to someone else to assist in resolving the issue. It is important to let both the child and parent know that sorting out the issues is the main priority – it is not a personal issue with the child or parent.

Have all parties had the opportunity to contribute to the discussion? (Has the child contributed fully?)

Make sure that the child is asked to contribute and give their ideas, feedback and possible solutions. It is very easy for adults to dominate the conversation and for parents to speak for their child. Very often children are expected to adhere to decisions made by adults that they do not understand or they feel unable to work to.

Has a way forward been agreed by all? (If not, what is the next route of resolution?)

Make sure that all parties understand and agree to any actions that have been put in place, particularly the child as they are central to the meeting. Make sure that any targets are SMART targets (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time related). If an agreement cannot be reached, discuss the next steps available. If you think the issue is urgent then try and arrange for another meeting with members of the committee as soon as possible. If there is a long period between the meetings then ill feeling can develop from both sides.

Is the result and any actions from the meeting known and understood by all?

Hopefully there is agreement at the end of the meeting. Some parties may not agree with all that has been said, but it is important that any actions are agreed and understood in order for them to take place. Make sure you reiterate the points at the end of the meeting. Make sure that the child fully understands any actions in order for them to comply with them.

Agree a follow up meeting to review

In order to make the meeting productive and the actions achievable, a progress meeting should be arranged at this time. This will give a clear message to the child and parent and set a date of when it would be reasonably expected to review the situation.

End the meeting on a positive

It is important that all parties leave the meeting feeling like something has been achieved. The child should feel that their views and ideas had been listened to and that they will be supported by the Coach, CWO and the Club in general. The parents should feel confident in discussing this or any issue with you in future. End on a positive, the meeting should not feel like a punishment; the meeting is one of a range of support mechanisms that you have in place in your club that you are all proud of.