

SEXUAL ACTIVITY & GROOMING

Occasionally within a sport setting intimate relationships can occur. This section looks at both sexual activity among young people and that between adults and young people.

A person in a legally defined 'position of trust' who takes advantage of their position to develop an intimate relationship with a child/young person may be committing a criminal offence known as 'abuse of trust'. Whilst athletic coaching is not currently defined in law as a 'position of trust', the principle of the law should be followed and reflected in club policies.

The notion of 'positions of trust' applies as much to young people in coaching and leadership roles as it does to adults.

Young people

Sexual activity between children/young people at team events, in sports facilities and at social activities organised by the club should be discouraged.

Criminal sexual behaviour committed by a young person should be referred to the police and/or social services. This may also lead to disciplinary action in accordance with the club's disciplinary procedure.

For more information see the National Guidance on 'Under-age Sexual Activity: Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People and Identifying Child Protection Concerns':

<http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/333495/0108880.pdf>

Adults

Sexual activity between adults and children under the age of 16 is illegal and must be reported to the police.

Sexual activity between adults and young people (aged 16 and 17 years) involved in sport raise serious issues given the power imbalance in the relationship and the position of trust on the part of the adult.

Even if a young person is of the age of consent (16 years) the authority associated with the adults role in the young athletes life may adversely influence their ability to genuinely consent to sexual activity. For example, the athlete may view the coach as having significant power and influence over issues such as funding, selection and progressing as an athlete, and feel powerless to decline unwanted advances.

Therefore, sexual activity between adults and young people (16+) involved in our sport is prohibited when the adult is in a position of trust or authority (coach, official etc.). This must be communicated clearly to adults in such positions and be included in any codes of conduct linked to such roles. Clear procedures must be drawn up to deal with such a situation promptly, fairly and consistently.

Grooming

Most adults involved in sport with children participate with the aim of providing a fun and positive experience for the children taking part. However, some may use sport as a way of gaining access to children with the purpose of developing inappropriate intimate relationships.

People who commit sexual offences against children often first gain the trust of people around the child, such as their family and friends and those involved in sport. Those who commit offences will portray themselves as caring and trustworthy and they befriend their victims to break down barriers before an offence may be committed.

This is referred to as 'grooming'. This predatory behaviour is an offence and may be prosecuted separately to direct sexual abuse. Any suspicions of grooming should be reported to police.