

Choosing a club, tutor or coach?



Safeguarding Children:
Guidance for parents in choosing activities, clubs or
personal tuition for children and young people



Thinking of your children attending a sports group, leisure activity or employing a personal tutor or coach?

Many parents support their children in attending various activities. These might include a sports group such as football or in attending a group to learn a new skill. They may also consider employing a personal tutor (sometimes referred to as a coach) for their child at different stages of their educational life. Often this can be to help boost school work, build on particular sports skills, or to develop a new skill such as playing a musical instrument.

For many children this is a good and valuable experience assisting the child's development, self-esteem and enjoyment.

When choosing any group activity or in providing personal tuition, it is important that parents are confident that their children will be safe and happy. This leaflet provides some points for you to consider in selecting group activities or tutors for your children.

Choosing a group activity or club

If your child is interested in attending a group activity, for example to learn a new sport, it is important to visit and find out how the group operates. It is best to visit a standard group activity session so you can see firsthand what the staff are doing and whether the children seem happy.

Coaches can sometimes be stern to maintain group discipline or excitable to motivate children to stretch their performance. The children may be a little anxious of the challenges at times but should never be upset nor become fearful of the coach or the activity. Paid or volunteer, all coaches and instructors should act professionally and in a similar way you would expect from school teachers.

Taking care of children and young people is a huge responsibility and it is important that staff are well trained, supported and have the necessary skills and experience to work with children.



Questions you might want to ask a group leader include:

- Does the club or tutor have a policy on safeguarding children?
- Who do you speak to if you're worried about anything?
- Are staff trained and do they have police checks (referred to as DBS checks)?
- Is the group linked to a professional body or recognised organisation?
- What is the staff ratio and is there a trained first aider on site?
- Are you required to sign any consent forms, or provide emergency contacts and your child's relevant medical details?
- Is there a written code of conduct for coaches and volunteers? (Many clubs will have codes of conduct for the children and parents as well).
- What's the policy if a child needs personal care?



Choosing a personal tutor or coach

Employing the best tutor for your child is vital, so taking time to get it right is important and will help keep your child safe. These are some simple steps and checks to make to help you decide.

- ✓ Always interview the tutor and be satisfied that they answer your questions fully.
- ✓ Ask to see personal references and confirm their authenticity by contacting the referees directly. Ask to see their qualification certificates (not photocopies) and be satisfied they are recognised and authentic.
- ✓ Ask to see their CV or employment record, if there are career gaps, ask reasons and seek evidence of any explanations offered.
- ✓ If the tutor is a qualified teacher ask to see a copy of the tutors Teaching Agency Registration and a copy of their DBS check.

(Essex County Council is not responsible for the checking of personal tutors.)

- ✓ If the tutor has recently been or is currently employed in a school, speak to the headteacher for a reference.
- ✓ Arrange a time for your child to meet the tutor as observing the interaction between the tutor and child may help you make your decision.

Keeping your child safe

When arranging tuition to be in your own home this should be, in a communal area of the household which is well organised and suitable for study, away from the distractions of television and radio (a bedroom is not appropriate).

If attending a group activity it is a good idea to always stay in the premises with your child and sit within your sight.

Ensure that you or another trusted adult chosen by you remains on the premises. Any chaperone arrangement offered by the tutor should be declined.

Check that access for you is easy and that you can observe and hear activity at any time you wish.

If it is group tuition seek assurances that your child will remain with the group at all times.

Your child should not travel alone with the coach/tutor at any time.

Any contact outside of activities should be directly with the parents. The coach should not contact the child direct, either via telephone, email or social media. Club websites or social media pages that provide information to all the club members are appropriate, and should be accessible to everyone. This is actually a very good way of parents seeing what is going on with club activities.

Ensure your child is aware of any arrangements that have been agreed.

Speak with your child regularly to ensure they are happy with the arrangements and any agreements made with the tutor have been kept.

Any volunteer or tutor that is mindful and aware of current expectations toward safeguarding children should have no objection to any of these checks or arrangements. Do not feel that you are acting unreasonably to expect this and you should not accept arrangements you are not happy with.

What to do if your child tells you something inappropriate has happened

It is important that you listen to what your child says and believe what they are saying reassuring them that it is not their fault.

If you are concerned that the coach /tutor has engaged in 'poor practice' i.e. has not done the right thing, rather than done something wrong that is abusive or a possible offence. Generally, we would advise parents to cancel the activities or keep the young person away from the activities until there has been time to seek advice.

If as a parent you feel uncomfortable speaking with someone within the club in the first instance, you can seek advice from the County Sports Partnership (Active Essex).

The Local Authority Designated Officer based in the Childrens Workforce Allegations Team should be informed if you any have concerns where it is believed that a person working with children has;

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.

You should contact Essex Police if you believe that a crime has been committed.



USEFUL CONTACTS:

Active Essex Safeguarding in Sport Officer:

Tel: 03330 137827

<http://www.activeessex.org/safeguarding/>

Duty LADO based in the Childrens Workforce Allegations Team (Essex County Council):

Tel: 03330 139797

<http://www.escb.co.uk/safeguardingtopics/saferrecruitment>

Essex Police:

Non-emergency number: 101 (available 24 hours a day seven days a week)

The non-emergency number does not replace 999

Produced by:

Essex County Council, Children's Workforce Allegations Team

&

County Sports Partnership - Active Essex

&

Essex Safeguarding Children Board

