

## How to support your child in football

### **Our children are strongly influenced by our own attitudes and behaviour.**

- Children's football is a time for them to develop their technical, physical, tactical and social skills. Focus on this, rather than exclusively on winning matches.
- Don't take it too seriously. Even if your child is talented, at this stage their enjoyment is still the main goal.
- Children need positive feedback to feel that they can improve their game. It doesn't help to tell them what they are doing wrong.
- Help them analyse their own game after the match is over. Ask them how they felt about it, about other players, and ask them what went well to reinforce their strengths
- Help children learn from their own mistakes by encouraging them to think about what they could have done instead. Remind them of their strengths.
- Help children to feel confident, enjoy themselves and feel like they 'belong' by supporting a positive atmosphere at a game.
- Football is a passionate game but don't let disappointment at a misplaced pass or a poor touch get in the way. Encourage players to 'move on'.
- Respect the officials – children copy their parents and other adults' behaviour!
- Encourage your club to adopt a 'Code of Conduct' for the types of behaviour you wish to see in football, with potential sanctions when codes are not adhered to. Talk to your child about these to confirm their understanding.

## How to manage a conflict situation

- The FA's Respect programme has introduced a 'Code of Conduct' for spectators. Pass a copy of this down a line of spectators prior to the game. It will help everyone be clear on what's expected from them
- Encourage your club to introduce a 'Designated Spectator Area' as part of the FA's Respect programme. It stops people crossing the line - literally!
- In this context, remember football is for the children, not the adults.

- It's not a professional game.
- It's meant to be fun.
- Getting angry won't solve anything.
- If adults lose control, children will lose respect.

#### **Also**

- Suggest everyone takes 'time out' if there's shouting.
- Never tolerate violence or abuse, in any form.
- If things do get out of hand report your concerns to the Club Welfare Officer or the County Football Association.

## **How to promote positive behaviour at your club**

#### **If you want to influence behaviour at your club, it helps if you're actively involved.**

- Attend parents' meetings as often as you can and raise any behaviour issues there, rather than on pitch sidelines.
- Encourage your club to sign up to the Respect Code of Conduct and try to re-read it during the season.
- If your child is a player, encourage them to sign the Respect Code of Conduct and encourage good behaviour.
- Deal with poor behaviour. Support club actions or County FA sanctions when someone breaks the Code of Conduct.
- Introduce the use of 'Designated Spectator Areas'. Order a set of Respect pitch-side barriers to mark this area.
- Assist the coach, if asked.
- Lead by example: be constructive, and help with training, transport and refreshments.
- Be inclusive - ensure that your club is open to all regardless of ability, race or gender.

## **What experts say about children and competition**

#### **Experts in child development tell us that:**

- Children should feel confident that they'll be supported, whether they win or lose.
- Too much pressure to win can have a negative effect and put children off the game altogether.
- Dreaming of success is fine, but make sure they're your child's dreams, not yours.
- It helps to manage your child's expectations, so they regard losing as learning, not as failure.
- Research has shown that children are more interested in playing the game than getting a result.
- Winning is great but at this stage it's not everything.
- If we see competition as a way to improve a team's game, losing can be as valuable as winning.

## Get the most from watching your child play football

### Be a good spectator

- Cheer good effort.
- Be positive and supportive of all the players.
- Allow the coach to do their job without interference.
- Respect the referee's decisions, even if you disagree.
- Don't criticise or dwell on mistakes or weaknesses – this undermines confidence.
- Appreciate the opposing team's efforts too.
- Take an FA coaching or referee course – improve your own understanding of the game and provide practical assistance to the club.

## Healthy habits at home

### Playing football requires lots of energy.

- Encourage your child to eat regularly.
- Help them eat a balanced diet - including calcium for strong bones, protein for growth and carbohydrates for energy.
- Use football role models to promote healthy eating to your child. Point out that, for example, John Terry or Faye White would eat a proper breakfast before a game.
- A healthy diet allows our bodies to recover more easily from stress and injury. Essential for players keen to get back on the pitch.
- Keep kids hydrated with water - football is hot work!
- Provide children with healthy snacks and a still (not fizzy) drink when they're training.
- Make sure they get enough sleep, especially before a match.
- Encourage your children to practise and try out new skills outside of playing matches and training.