

The LTA Code of Conduct for all those working with children in tennis

Whilst it is important for adults to understand their responsibilities with children, the LTA is concerned that specific advice is given concerning the behaviour of all coaches, staff and club and other officials. In addition, those who employ, for example, coaches, should know what standard of behaviour is acceptable.

Those working with children in tennis should:

1. Be professional and maintain the highest standards of personal behaviour at all times.
2. Be aware of situations which can be misconstrued or manipulated by others, for example, if the coach or official is alone with a child in the clubhouse, changing rooms or similar places, they are open to the possibility of allegations about their behaviour.
3. Be vigilant and aware of how actions can be misinterpreted. For example, adolescents can have strong emotional feelings towards coaches. Whilst these should not be dismissed and the youngster hurt as a result, neither should they be encouraged in any way.
4. Not appear to favour or show interest in one child more than another
5. Be very aware that physically handling a player, perhaps to develop a game skill such as the backhand swing, can be misconstrued by an observer or even by the player. Explain to the players what they will be shown.
6. Never swear or use or respond to sexual innuendo
7. Design and use training methods and training programmes which are wholly appropriate to the individual player
8. Ensure that, as far as possible, they are not alone when working with young players on an individual basis. If this is unavoidable then the parents should be made aware of the situation for the sake of the coach or official. This also means that children should not be alone in cars or home with a coach/official on a regular basis. The presence of others is an insurance against false accusations.
9. Conduct all dealings with children in a public environment in full view of others, in order that all behaviour can be observed
10. On tours/trips away from home, ensure that another adult is always present when working with children. For example, another adult should always be present if a child's room is visited at any time and the door should always be left fully open.
11. Report any concerns within the area of Child Protection (physical, emotional, sexual or neglect) in confidence and without delay, to the Child Protection Officer or a responsible person who can give advice and recommend any necessary action. This includes issues of bullying.
12. Do not, at any time, discuss an allegation or suspicion with another person, other than police, before either the above person or a responsible person has been contacted.
13. When reporting an allegation or suspicion, record information, including relevant details. (This includes the nature of the allegation, background information of the parties involved, the period of time to which the allegation relates and the degree to which the information is known to be fact rather than opinion or hearsay).
14. At no time make comment to the media. The LTA Press Office should be made aware of any media interest in relation to child protection.

In the event of an allegation of improper behaviour being made, the personal conduct and professional behaviour of the adult will be very important evidence. For child abuse to take place, particularly sexual abuse, the child and the adult(s) will generally be alone and away from public view. Thus the best defence is to avoid all situations in which behaviour cannot be observed.

