



SPORT INTEGRITY  
AUSTRALIA

Safeguarding  
in Sport



# How to Involve Children and Young People in **Your Sporting Organisation**

NOVEMBER 2023



Participation is an active process that enables children and young people's views and experiences to influence and contribute to appropriate and relevant decision making. Involvement of children and young people will be meaningful and valued by the organisation.

Children and young people are the lifeblood and future of most sports. Sporting organisations have a moral duty to involve them in decision-making. Their right to participate and be involved is underpinned by [Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), is reflected under Principle 2 of the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) and is embedded in the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.



Engaging children and young people will ensure that they contribute and actively participate in building an organisational culture that is safe for them.

In legal terms a child is someone under the age of 18 years. However, in this context many organisations extend this definition to include young adults/people (up to 25 years old) whose views and relatively recent experiences as young people are still relevant. Most young people are involved as participants in sport, but many have taken on other roles, as coaches, officials, event organisers, leaders, or in other voluntary roles.

## Benefits of involving and consulting with children and young people

- Recognition that children and young people are competent participants with valid views, ideas, and experiences. Organisations become more responsive to this core group, and more child-focused, with anticipated benefits in terms of retention and recruitment within the sport.
- It provides opportunities for children and young people to provide feedback and raise their own issues.
- Increased success and satisfaction in implementing services, projects and equipment that are appropriate and relevant to children and young people. Failure to consult may result in services and programs not meeting the needs of children and young people, leading to dissatisfaction and the loss of participants to the sport.
- Increased empowerment, engagement, and commitment by children and young people to participate and contribute to the organisation. Shared sense of ownership in decision making and creating change.
- A greater sense of inclusion, improved child-adult relations, and reciprocal trust, respect and feeling valued across generations.
- Development of skills, experiences, and confidence that can be applied across areas of their life.
- The organisation can grow a valuable resource for consultation and involvement – in both the short and long term. Opportunity to create life-long participants in sport.
- Children and young people are more effective in connecting with other children and young people in undertaking subsequent consultation or disseminating information.
- The organisation models respect and support for the participation of children and young people.

# Core principles underlying the involvement of children and young people

## Children and young people's involvement must

- **Be based on their right to be involved:** particularly in decisions that will involve or impact on them.
- **Be based on honesty, openness, and respect:** the sporting organisation should be prepared to hear, consider, and where appropriate, act on information, views and feedback that may challenge existing plans, perceptions, and practice.
- When engaging with children and young people it is important to be open and transparent about how they will be involved and how their feedback and views will be used to impact decision making and change.
- Participation and consultation do not require the organisation to accept or act on all feedback from children and young people, but respect does involve ensuring that feedback is heard, seriously considered and, where deemed appropriate, incorporated into planning and reviews.
- **It is supported and endorsed by club leadership (e.g. Club committees/Presidents):** it is essential that plans and arrangements to involve and consult with children and young people have leadership endorsement and is included in the organisations strategies/plans.
- **Be meaningful, not tokenistic:** there should be a clear purpose to the process which fits with the sporting organisation's overall strategy, plans, or aims. Involving children and young people for the sake of it achieves nothing; it risks alienating them, increases the turnover of participants and could damage the reputation and image of the organisation.
- **Define roles and responsibilities:** it should be made clear what their role will be (e.g. establish Terms of Reference/role descriptions for on-going groups) and what the outcomes will be (e.g. a report presented to the committee and written by the group or compiled from their comments). Focus on the unique perspective that children and young people can contribute across the whole sporting organisation as well as areas that may impact them directly.
- **Be adequately resourced:** involving children and young people may require different types of resourcing. This may be in terms of officer/staff/volunteer/s time; a budget to cover costs such as a meeting room, refreshments and resources and appreciation/acknowledgment rewards.
- **Address diversity and power issues:** steps should be taken to ensure that potential obstacles to participation by individuals or groups are identified and addressed. Power differentials between adults involved and children and young people, and between different groups of children and young people, should be recognised and addressed. Clarify ownership and leadership of the group; and how differences of opinion will be addressed, respected and valued.
- **Build in feedback:** arrangements should be in place to ensure that children and young people are kept updated about the way in which their participation/feedback has been used, received, and about changes or decisions made by the organisation because of their efforts.



## Examples of engaging children and young people

There are many ways that an organisation can involve and engage with children and young people to ensure that they have a voice and feel valued. Outlined below are some examples, this is certainly not exhaustive list, and sports may implement a number of strategies to involve and capture the thoughts and ideas of their young participants.

- Survey children and young people – Prior to making decisions on their behalf, for example what style of playing kit to order, ask them.
- Include a feedback section for children and young people on the sport's social media platforms.
- Appoint a youth ambassador.
- Establish a youth advisory group, this may include appointing a Board Member to sit on the group and for a member of the group to sit on the Board.
- When establishing working groups include youth representation.
- When undertaking strategic planning include workshops with children and young people.
- Provide an opportunity for children and young people to share their experiences, this may be by providing a designated section on the sport's social media platforms solely for children and young people, moderated by a young person.

## Practical considerations

Despite the differences between planning and engaging children and young people in a one-off consultation process and that of establishing an on-going consultation group, many of the factors outlined below remain relevant in both instances.

### Organisational 'fit'

How will the involvement/consultation/participation process contribute to promoting the sporting organisation's strategic plan, services/programs or assisting reviews? Is there clear committee/leadership commitment and support?



## Purpose, tasks and role

Is this a 'one off' or single-issue consultation process (e.g. seeking feedback on a website or satisfaction level of a program) or the establishment of an on-going committee or group (e.g. a sport's youth forum)?

If it is an ongoing consultation process, what is/are the role/s of the group (e.g. to produce or design sporting attire, comment on policy or organisation practices, represent young people across the organisation by identifying and advocating on issues affecting children and young people within the organisation)? Are there identified outcomes required (e.g. a report or reports to the committee/president/leadership group, suggested amendments to practices or equipment, or identification of issues the organisation should address)?

What is the focus or objectives of the group? Will the group consider a range of issues affecting children and young people within the organisation, or a specific issue. Are young people being included in decision making that impacts the whole of the organisation?

## Support and facilitation

Are there members of the organisation that are given specific responsibility for supporting and/or facilitating this activity?

Do they have a clear understanding of their role in working with children and young people? Is there a job description (what they will be required to do) and person specification (the experience and attributes they require for the role – e.g. commitment to principles of children and young people's participation, communicating with children and young people, adequate vetting)?

Is this role accounted for in terms of their time and support?





## Recruitment

Has a recruitment process been developed to recruit children and young people and how will it be implemented and promoted (e.g. advertising, expression of interest opportunities, interviews, social media, or other formats)?

Has information about the role and purpose of the consultation process been developed and is available to children and young people during the recruitment process?

Will the group seek representatives of children and young people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds and gender and in all roles across the organisation (e.g. participants, young officials, young organisers, existing young people's groups), or will there be a focus on a particular group or groups?

Have the additional support needs of children and young people with disabilities (e.g. in terms of access, carers or additional staffing) been considered and addressed?

## Format of the Consultation Process

What format is planned (e.g. face to face meetings, video conferencing, online links, or a combination)?

Have the children/young people contributed to determining the format?

What type of venues will be used (consider potential access issues for disabled children and young people)?

Where will meetings take place (consider where members may be travelling from)?

When will meetings take place (e.g. consider school, college or university timetables, examination periods, sporting commitments and travel requirements)?

## Human and Financial resources

Is a budget required?

Has consideration been given to the potential costs of venues, refreshments, materials, travel and accommodation?

What staff/volunteers/officials are required to attend?

Have the additional support needs of children and young people with a disability (eg attendance of a parent/ carer) been considered?

Are there development opportunities that group members can access to build on, eg communication or presentation skills?



## Facilitation, input and style

Who will chair or facilitate the group (adult staff member or young person)?

How will agenda items be raised, agreed or identified (within the group and from elsewhere in the organisation)?

Will style, length of meetings, nature of activities, tools used, and breaks reflect the needs of the group on the basis of age, role and/or ability?

How will codes of conduct for group members and facilitators be developed and agreed?

How will a sense of fun be included and maintained?

## Communication

Who will be responsible for recording meetings and activities, and for preparing feedback (in writing or through presentations) or reports?

To what degree will the children and young people retain control over what is recorded and reported?

How will disputes (between adult facilitators and young members or between young members) be managed, resolved, and recorded?

How will the outcomes of the group be reported back to the committee/leadership group/president of the sporting organisation?

How will the committee/leadership group/president communicate their decision making back to the group?

How will the wider organisation (and in particular other children and young people) be updated and informed about the group's work (e.g. reports on website, through social media, e-bulletins)?



## Autonomy of Children and Young People

Although sporting organisation staff and volunteers at the outset need to have established the basis on which a proposed group may operate (as above), in many cases groups will later assume responsibility for many aspects of its role and operation (e.g. by developing terms of reference, job descriptions, codes of conduct, taking responsibility for chairing/facilitating, agenda setting, recording and writing/presenting feedback).



## Contact us

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## Appendix A: Children and Youth Advisory Group Terms of Reference



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# Children and Youth Advisory Group Terms of Reference

## Introduction

The (name of club/organisation) Children and Youth Advisory Group (CYAG) has been established by the Board of (name of sport/organisation) to receive direct input from children and young people about issues that are important to them in relation to their involvement with the (name of club/organisation). The CYAG will be the voice of young people across (name of club/organisation) and will be committed to engaging with other children, young people and adults so that they can get their opinions heard and issues addressed.

<b>Name of Committee:</b>	Children and Youth Advisory Group
<b>Purpose of the</b>	The purpose of the (name of club/organisation) Children and Youth Advisory Group (CYAG) is to give children and young people the opportunity to actively participate, be engaged, be heard and contribute to decision making within the organisation.
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Enhance the value and contribution of children and young people.</li><li>■ Represent and advocate for children and young people.</li><li>■ Identify areas of importance for children and young people.</li><li>■ Provide advice and recommendations to the Board on issues relating to the sport and how improvements may be made.</li><li>■ Identify opportunities to increase the number of children and young people that join (name of club/organisation).</li><li>■ Identify and implement engagement strategies for children and young people.</li><li>■ Increase participation of children and young people in the organisation by improving communication, relationship building and collaboration between children, young people, and adults.</li><li>■ Celebrate the successes and achievements of children and young people involved in (name of the club/organisation).</li><li>■ Provide an avenue for young people to develop skills in teamwork, peer consultation, leadership, governance and provide a pathway into volunteering.</li></ul>

<b>Eligibility</b>	<p>To be eligible for appointment to the committee the child/young person is required to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ aged between 12 to 21 years</li> <li>■ a registered participant (player, coach, volunteer) of the (name of sport).</li> <li>■ complete and submit the Children and Youth Advisory Group Application Form by the closing date.</li> <li>■ if an applicant is 18 or older, they must have a valid Working with Children Check (or equivalent in State/Territory)</li> </ul> <p>The application should address the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ have an interest and passion around issues for children and young people in the sport and the organisation.</li> <li>■ a willingness to work in a team and participate in group discussions.</li> <li>■ ability and willingness to listen to others in the group, be respectful of others' opinions and be open to different ideas.</li> <li>■ have an ability to represent a broad range of views that reflect the diversity of the organisation.</li> <li>■ possess the ability and willingness to engage and seek feedback from other children and young people.</li> <li>■ have the capacity and motivation to commit to the CYAG for the required duration.</li> </ul>
<b>Selection Process</b>	<p>Selection to the group will be made by the Board of (name of club/organisation) based on the applications received and assessed against the eligibility criteria. If no suitable or insufficient applications are received, the Board may re-open applications and/or identify suitable applicants.</p> <p>Interviews will be held with applicants 18 years and older.</p> <p>The Board will seek to appoint children and young people from a broad range of backgrounds taking into consideration a range of ages, genders, cultural backgrounds, LGBTI+ and children and young people with disabilities.</p>
<b>Membership</b>	<p>The CYAG shall consist of 8-12 members. In addition, a representative from the Board will sit on the group.</p>

	<p>Appointed group members will participate in the group for a period of one (1) year, with the opportunity to apply for a further term.</p> <p>A chairperson will be selected from within the group by the group.</p>
<b>Meetings</b>	<p>The group will meet no less than 8 times during the one-year term, at approximate one-month intervals.</p> <p>The schedule of meeting dates, times and venue will be decided by the group once they are appointed. Meetings should not exceed 90 minutes unless prior notification is provided.</p> <p>Meetings may be held face to face or via social media.</p> <p>Additional meetings may be scheduled at the discretion of the group.</p> <p>It is expected that members attend all scheduled meetings. If a member is unavailable, they should notify the Chairperson in advance of the meeting.</p>
<b>Meeting Procedures</b>	<p>The meeting procedures will be established by the CYAG at their first meeting.</p>
<b>Guiding Principles and Code of Conduct</b>	<p>The guiding principles and code of the conduct of the group will be developed by the CYAG. In developing these principles, the following need to be addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ being inclusive</li> <li>■ being respectful</li> <li>■ being open minded</li> <li>■ challenging and exploring</li> <li>■ actively participating and engaging</li> <li>■ committed to improvement</li> <li>■ willingness to share</li> <li>■ team orientated</li> <li>■ punctual, well prepared</li> <li>■ realistic in achievements and outcomes</li> <li>■ no personal agendas</li> </ul>



**Reporting**

A report of each CYAG meeting is to be provided to the Board.

A representative from the CYAG is to attend the Board Meetings.

The Board is to provide feedback to the CYAG on any decision made by the Board in relation to recommendations made by the CYAG.

SAMPLE



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### CONTACT INFORMATION

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