

# MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR - GUIDANCE

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## 1. PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

Staff, volunteers and coaches may have to deal with challenging behaviour from people – including children, young people and adults at risk. Managing challenging behaviour is a shared responsibility between all those concerned – including staff, volunteers, coaches, parents, carers and the individual concerned themselves.

Challenging behaviour is behaviour which (intentionally or otherwise) is contrary to reasonable expectations of participation in sporting and social activity. This can include the inability to follow rules and instructions (including codes of conduct, policies, procedures), behaviour that puts at risk the safety of one or more individuals or behaviour that is aggressive and unpleasant.

The aim of this guidance note is to inform all parties about the roles they play in dealing with difficult and challenging behaviour. At the centre is the need to remember that safety is paramount, so that everyone in fencing can enjoy the activities in which they are involved in a safe environment.

Clubs and organisations should identify measures they can put in place to promote good practice among staff, organisers, parents/carers, and good behaviour by all. Fencers and others involved in fencing should understand that if their behaviour goes beyond what is acceptable, or threatens others' safety, event organisers or staff will take action to intervene in accordance with these measures, for the sake of everyone's wellbeing.

## MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

This guidance note identifies good practice, outlines strategies and sanctions that can be used, as well as those that must never be used. It also encourages a proactive approach to help people manage their own behaviour. Guidance for dealing with difficult behaviour is based on the following principles:

- Fencing has strict rules in place to keep people safe while participating in the sport.
- The safety of all participants in the sport is paramount.
- There is a specific responsibility to support the welfare of all children and adults at risk
- All those involved with fencing (including volunteers, coaches, fencers, children and parents/carers) should be provided with clear guidelines about expected standards of conduct, and the process for responding to unacceptable behaviour.
- No-one should ever be subjected to any treatment that could be considered to be harmful, abusive, humiliating or degrading.
- Some people will exhibit challenging behaviour as a result of medical or other personal circumstances and may require specific or additional support or guidance. It is the responsibility of the person (or their parents or carers) to communicate these circumstances in advance of participating in activities if there needs to be additional support in place. These, and any other unique needs, should be then discussed with parents/carers and the fencer when planning an activity, and extra support provided if needed and an agreed action plan developed as appropriate. This discussion needs to be held in the context of the overall safety of the sport.
- Fencing can make a big difference in improving life for people, so everyone should be supported to participate, wherever possible. There will be times, when safety cannot be maintained, and a fencer or other individual may have to be excluded from activities.

## 2. INVOLVING PARENTS/CARERS

Where a person exhibiting challenging behaviour is U18, or an adult at risk has a carer, it is important to involve the parent/carer throughout the process. Where a parent/carer is referred to in the guidelines this means: the parent or guardian of an U18 or the carer of an adult at risk. It is important to recognise that not all adults at risk will have a carer. Parents or guardians of adults who are not adults at risk should not be involved without the explicit permission of the adult. It is also important to recognise that U18s and adults at risk are entitled to make their views known. Adults at risk should be involved in all aspects of decision making that relates to them unless they lack the capacity to do so.

## 3. PLANNING

Good practice requires activities to be planned around the group as a whole, but should also take individual needs into consideration. There should be procedures to enable organisers to establish whether members of the group have, or are likely to have, difficulty with the tasks, the other participants or the environment.

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Where there are potential risks, strategies to manage these risks should be agreed in advance. The appropriate number of adults needed to safely manage a session should be established, taking into account the potential need to respond to challenging behaviour to safeguard other members of the group. This should be done taking into consideration the available resources of the club.

When a person's behaviour has been identified as requiring extra support or specialist expertise, this should be discussed with them, involving parents/carers as appropriate.

In the case of U18s and adults at risk, the club should seek to work in partnership with parents/carers (as appropriate), and where necessary external agencies, to ensure that the person can participate safely. In these instances parents/carers are expected to fully participate in creating a safe environment. If necessary an action plan should be developed to ensure that all parties are aware of the arrangements agreed.

### 4. AGREEING ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

Anyone organising a fencing activity should ensure that Codes of Conduct are in place and communicated.

It is recommended that everyone involved in the activity (staff, coaches, volunteers, fencers and parents/carers) has the opportunity to be involved in developing/reviewing a Code of Conduct that agrees acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and the sanctions that may be applied in response to a breach of the code. Codes of conduct can be reviewed at the start of the season, in advance of a trip away or as part of a welcome session.

Evidence suggests that when people are involved in the preparation of a Code of Conduct, they arrive at a very sensible and working set of rules and there is more 'buy-in' from the participants.

BF asks all members to sign up to their [Code of Conducts](#) as a condition of membership and there are specific Codes of Conduct that apply to other groups of members (eg GBR Athletes). Clubs or organisers of events may wish to develop their own Code of Conduct based on the BF Codes of Conduct and for their members to sign up when they join.

### 5. MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

Where challenging behaviour is encountered responses should always be proportionate to the actions, imposed as soon as is practicable and fully explained to the participant and where appropriate their parents/carers. In dealing with people who display disruptive or challenging behaviour, organisers might consider the following options:

- **Time out** – from the activity, group or individual work.
- **Reparation** – making amends.
- **Restitution** – giving something back.
- **Behavioural reinforcement** – rewards for good behaviour, consequences for negative behaviour.

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- **De-escalation of the situation** – talking things through.
- **Increased supervision** by staff/volunteers.
- **Increased involvement** of parents.
- **Use of individual ‘contracts’ or agreements** for future or continued participation.
- **Sanctions or consequences**, e.g. missing an outing.
- **Seeking additional support** by escalating through the BF Area and Lead Safeguarding Officers, who can support communication with other agencies, e.g. referral for support to Adult/Children’s Social Care, discussion with key workers, speaking to the child’s school about management strategies, etc. **Note: all of these require parental consent unless the child is felt to be ‘at risk’ or ‘in need of protection’.**
- **Exclusion**, temporary or permanent.

The following should **NEVER** be permitted as a means of managing a person’s behaviour:

- Physical punishment or the threat of such.
- Refusal to speak to or interact with them.
- Being deprived of food, water, access to changing rooms or toilets, or other essential facilities.
- Verbal intimidation, ridicule or humiliation.

The needs of any person for whom sanctions are frequently necessary should be reviewed. This review should involve the person, their parents/carer (where appropriate) and in some cases others who provide support or services. If a person continues to be disruptive, or presents a danger to themselves or others, they may have to be suspended or barred from the group or club activities.

## 6. PHYSICAL INTERVENTION

The use of physical intervention should always be avoided unless it is absolutely necessary to prevent a person injuring themselves or others, or causing serious damage to property.

Physical contact to prevent something happening should always be the result of conscious decision-making, not a reflexive reaction. Before intervening, the member of staff should ask themselves, ‘Is this the only option to manage the situation and ensure everyone’s safety?’ If there is a need to physically intervene, this should be done in the least restrictive possible way to prevent a person from being hurt, and should be done only after all other strategies have been exhausted.

Where possible adult witnesses should be present.

In the event that physical intervention is needed, the following must always be considered:

- Contact should be in line with good practice and never be made in a way that could be interpreted as sexual. BF has published guidance on physical contact.
- Any form of physical intervention should achieve an outcome that is in the best interests of the person showing the behaviour, but also ensures the safety of other participants.
- Organisers should consider the circumstances, and the risks associated with employing physical intervention compared with the risks of not doing so.
- The scale and nature of physical intervention must always be proportionate to the behaviour of the person and the harm or damage they might cause.

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- Any form of physical intervention should employ only a reasonable amount of force. It should be the minimum force needed to avert injury to a person or serious damage to property and applied for the shortest period of time.
- Organisers should never employ physical interventions that present an unreasonable risk anyone.
- Physical intervention should **NEVER** be used as a form of punishment.
- Physical intervention should **NOT** inflict pain.
- Where people are identified as having additional needs or behaviours that are likely to require physical intervention, this should be discussed with parents or carers and ideally the parents and carers should always be on hand to apply it. This should be in line with a pre-agreed action plan to manage the behaviour.

Any physical intervention that does happen should as soon as is practically possible

- be reported to the parent or carer, and
- be recorded in full (all details surrounding the incident) in writing and passed to the Club Welfare Officer.

In more serious cases BF should be informed using the [Poor Practice Report form available on the BF Website](#).

## 7. PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

It is in everyone's best interest for the fencing club or organisation to have a procedure around managing behaviour which can be incorporated into a broader safeguarding policy. The guidelines should clearly set out:

- The standard of behaviour expected from coaches, staff, volunteers and participants. These can be laid out in separate codes of conduct.
- How the organisation will respond to unacceptable behaviour.
- How the organisation will respond to 'high risk' behaviour.
- The circumstances in which people will be excluded or prevented from taking part in activity.
- Guidance, information or any support or training available to coaches, staff and volunteers
- Circumstances in which external agencies will be contacted, for support or in response to concerns.
- A process to agree what will happen after an incident. Clubs must have arrangements in place to check on the wellbeing of those involved, guidance on recording information and who should be informed, and a system for recording and monitoring incidents.

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