

Parental behaviour scenarios for sports organisations

How to use these scenarios

The scenarios below are examples of poor parental behaviour which can be used by clubs or sports organisations to initiate discussions about the challenges coaches and staff may face.

Note: The term 'parents' refers to parents and carers.

These scenarios would be best used in a group setting, although you might want to look at these on an individual basis to inform your work with parents.

If working in a group, cut up each scenario into a 'scenario' and 'response' and hand out the 'scenario' portion only.

Ask coaches and staff to think about the following:

- How and by whom should this situation be managed and responded to?
- What policies and processes will apply?
- What steps could have been taken (at club, county, region or sport governing body levels) to reduce the likelihood of this situation arising?

After coaches or staff have given feedback on how they would handle each scenario, either hand out or read out the response and discuss if there's anything that hadn't been identified or how effective they think each method would be in dealing with the situation.

These scenarios can be used as an opportunity to inform your parental behaviour policies or codes of conduct for parents.

For further information on working with parents in your sport, visit the cpsu.org.uk/parents

Parental behaviour scenarios

Scenario 1 – The angry parent

Scenario:

During a match, one parent becomes increasingly vocal in his criticism of his daughter, Sally, and several of her teammates. Sally looks miserable and upset. As her performance deteriorates, her father resorts to verbal abuse and threatens to 'sort her out' if she doesn't pull herself together.

The team coach intervenes but is then sworn at and threatened with a thumping.

Response:

This incident should be recorded by the witnessing coach and passed to the **club welfare officer** (CWO).

This kind of strong criticism of her performance could be a sign of deeper issues at home or in the relationship with her father and it's important that Sally is offered the right support by the CWO or other support services if needed.

Your clubs **code of conduct for parents** should clearly outline that this kind of behaviour on the sidelines isn't acceptable and this should be addressed with Sally's father at a later date when emotions have calmed down, reminding him of his commitment to your code.

If your club doesn't have a code of conduct for parents, it's a good idea to develop one and make sure all parents sign up to its principles. This can help prevent this kind of behaviour taking place. Let parents know what the consequences of poor behaviour might be if they don't behave in an acceptable manner.

If this type of behaviour doesn't stop after the CWO has intervened, it's important that staff record all future incidents and any sanctions are carried out with the knowledge of all parties. The club may want to seek advice from their **National Governing Body** if problems persist.

Actions:

- **record the incident** using the process for **recording and reporting** in place at the club
- involve the club welfare officer to provide support to Sally
- remind Sally's father of the clubs **code of conduct for parents** and carry out any sanctions necessary
- seek further guidance from your **National Governing Body** if problems persists

Parental behaviour scenarios

Scenario 2 – The interfering parent

Scenario:

Asif's father, Hassan, used to play his son's sport at a county representative level, and seems to see himself very much as the expert and an unofficial (and uninvited) assistant coach.

Asif's coach finds it difficult to establish his authority in training and during competitions because Hassan constantly chips in with his own thoughts and suggestions, often contradicting the coach's plans. The team are becoming confused and dispirited.

Response:

In this instance, mediation may be an effective way forward. Coaches, the club welfare officer and any other relevant staff may want to arrange to meet both Asif and his father Hassan to discuss how they both see Asif's development in the sport.

This approach gives Asif the platform to let his father know about the type of input and support he appreciates from him and the kind of input he doesn't.

If coaches and staff don't feel comfortable approaching Asif and his father on an individual basis, this could be an opportunity to hold a session with all the parents involved in the clubs to **discuss how they can support their child in a positive way**, as well as looking at boundaries.

Some clubs may feel they don't want parents present at practices and competitions for this very reason; however it's better practice to give parents the tools to be a more positive influence through information or parents meetings or sessions.

For more information on how parents can positively support their child visit <https://thecpsu.org.uk/parents>

Actions:

- try to set up mediation with the coach, club welfare officer, Asif and his father
- **inform and educate parents** on how to positively support their child as a preventative
- **signpost parents** to tools and advice on how to offer positive support

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Scenario 3 – The pushy parent

Scenario:

Sue is 14 years old and has been swimming at an elite level since she was 12. Sue's mother has been very involved in enabling her to take part in swimming and has always been vocal in how she has directed her from the poolside. Sue's coach has noticed for a number of months that she seems lethargic and her interest in swimming is not what it was.

At times, Sue looks unhappy and tearful. Increasingly, Sue's mother is expressing more and more frustration with her openly at the club and before many sessions, Sue's mother takes her to one side and has a firm private word with her. She was heard by several other parents to say: 'I've put a lot of effort into your swimming and you're not giving it all up now.'

Response:

It shouldn't be forgotten that many parents invest both their time and money into enabling their child to take part and succeed in their chosen sport.

When parents invest in their children, it's natural that they usually want to see some rewards for that investment, whether it is pride, or their child enjoying taking part.

Problems tend to occur when the reward parents seek for that investment is based in achievement and not in enjoyment, or differs from the goals their children are working towards.

As a preventative, clubs might want to work with children in their sport to communicate what's important to them about taking part in sport to their parents. This can help parents to have a more realistic view of what their child's experience and goals look like.

In this instance, Sue's coach should involve the club welfare officer who can speak to Sue and offer her the opportunity to speak to her mother about how she feels about taking part in the sport with the support of other adults.

If Sue doesn't want to speak to her mum in this formal way, she should be advised that taking part in sport should be fun as well as developing her skills and that there are people there to support her if she wants to let her mum know how she feels.

It might also help for the coach to let Sue's mum know how well Sue is doing in swimming and encourage her mum to see the positive strides Sue is already making.

Actions:

- provide children with opportunities to share their goals with parents
- chat to the parent about realistic goals and development
- involve the club welfare officer to provide support