



Towcestrians RFC Guide To Autism & ADHD



Team Managers & Head Coaches Guide to autism & ADHD at Towcestrians RFC

You may be asked to include an individual with autism or ADHD in your age group. Here is short guide to help you meet their needs.

RESPECT TEAMWORK ENJOYMENT SPORTSMANSHIP DICIPLINE



Autism

Communication

People on the autism spectrum communicate in different ways and many find eye contact difficult.

- Try to make your communication **clear, concise and direct**.
- Many people on the autism spectrum are visual learners. Try to accompany verbal instructions with a demonstration and **visual supports**. This should be a main focus for all children as they learn at different rates.

Adapting the environment

Many people with autism have sensory sensitivity which can affect one or more of the five senses: sight, sound, smell, touch and taste. For a person with autism certain background sounds may be unbearably loud or distracting causing them anxiety.

- Try to reduce distractions and adopt a **low arousal** approach to reduce anxiety and aid concentration.
- Be mindful of **sensory differences** and adapt sessions when required.
- Try to deliver new or unfamiliar activities in an environment that the individual is used to and comfortable in.



Safety

People with autism cannot always foresee the consequences of their actions.

- Some people on the autism spectrum may have a limited sense of danger. With this in mind, ensure that you have clear physical boundaries for each session and **explain safety rules in a way that the person understands these**.
- Be vigilant in checking for injuries as autistic people may carry on participating, unaware that they have sustained an injury - some may even overreact to minor injuries at times.

Planning an activity session and engaging participants

Planning ahead can help people know what to expect and feel confident in participating.

- Implement a consistent structure for each session, including having structure in an unstructured environment. For example, in breaks during the session ensure that you **have something prepared to keep your participants engaged**.
- If you know that the participant has a special interest try to engage with it as a means of incentive or feedback.
- It is important to recognise participants' **success and achievements**, but make sure that praise is not exaggerated or 'over the top'. Feedback should be fair and constructive - by permanently giving praise the real meaning behind it can be lost.
- Don't assume that all people on the autism spectrum dislike team games. Some people might find team games daunting but this does not always stop people from participating.
- People on the autism spectrum tend to **'live in the moment'**. Confidence can be very negatively affected if an individual has a negative experience of sport or physical activity. Make sure they are enjoying 'the moment!'



Siblings

Consider offering 'Sibling Sessions' to involve siblings so that your participants have a familiar face to go to. However try not to depend on siblings to look after their brother or sister, as they need to be able to enjoy the activities as well.



ADHD

Communication

When kids compete in sports, their own mental and emotional issues can quickly become their fiercest competition. This is especially true of young athletes coping with learning disabilities (LD) or Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD).

Communication needs to be clear from the beginning of any training session or team match, be aware of the following barriers that a person may be experiencing.



- Fragile egos and personal struggles make them more prone to **internal and external interference**.
- Performance on the Rugby pitch, take on undue importance as a host of issues are brought to the fore.
- Trouble with frustration tolerance, recovery skills, communication, or self-assessment can transform sports into a battleground of negative self-talk and limited self-control.

Adapting the environment

You may wish to be proactive in coaching the "**mental game**" to a child who struggles With learning and/or attention problems. Strategies that help children manage their emotional challenges of competition help preserve the **fun and positive contributions** In sports can make to character development. Making the sessions constructive and fun is a good way to **engage all participates**.





Planning an activity session

Athletic competition parallels many of the academic and life challenges faced by all Children, including those with LD and AD/HD. Developing skills such as poise under pressure, graceful defeat, and quick recovery from error help build character.

Help a child understand the "bigger picture" of how sports provide a training ground for life. Strategize how to handle fooling around by teammates, harassing opponents, and other challenges.

*Emphasize the influence of confidence and self-control to success,
No matter the score.*

Planning ahead can help people know what to expect and feel confident in participating. Team Pep talks before training & match games are as important as the session itself. This is the time to bring everyone together and remind those in the group that if you Work together listening and respectfully. *It is crucial you work as one; this is a proven recipe for success.*





Why your valuable time, effort & delivery are so important

As a coach you are a key player. Informed guidance delivered by a supportive coach will greatly benefit every child.

Activity Exercise for your group

An activity sheet can be a great way of expressing positive new information. The activity sheet available to you "A New Member of Our Team" has been developed for you to use as an informative support tool to introduce children who need a little more understanding into a sporting environment. The objective of the exercise is to provide team mates with a better idea of why a child may behave differently or sometimes have a different way of conducting themselves and why.

It is suggested that all team managers embrace this activity and make a time allowance at their earliest convenience (prior to a normal training session would be best practice) to complete this with their team. This should be a short friendly session, held in a comfortable quiet environment, the club house would be sufficient. Refreshments will be provided for all participants.

These tips and content of this booklet are to offer advice when delivering sport and physical activity to participants with autism and ADHD or other disabilities.

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