



Safeguarding Neurodivergent participants

1 Get to know the individual

Avoid assumptions. Every neurodivergent person has different strengths, challenges, communication preferences, and support needs.

2 Use clear and consistent communication

Give instructions in simple, concrete language. Break tasks into smaller steps and check understanding. Visual demonstrations can often be more effective than verbal explanations alone.

3 Create predictable routines

Many neurodivergent participants benefit from knowing what to expect. Share session plans, explain changes in advance when possible, and maintain consistent coaching approaches.

4 Consider sensory needs

Sports environments can be noisy, crowded, bright, or physically overwhelming. Identify potential sensory triggers and offer reasonable adjustments such as quieter spaces, ear defenders, or opportunities for breaks.

5 Promote psychological safety

Create a culture where participants feel safe to ask questions, make mistakes, and express concerns. Challenge bullying, exclusion, teasing, and negative stereotypes immediately.

6 Recognise signs of distress

Distress may not always look the same for neurodivergent people. Withdrawal, increased anxiety, emotional outbursts, shutdowns, repetitive behaviours, or reduced communication may indicate that support is needed.



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Make reporting concerns accessible

Ensure safeguarding information is available in accessible formats. Some individuals may find it difficult to disclose concerns verbally, so provide alternative ways to report worries, such as written forms, text messages, or trusted advocates.

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Support safe relationships and boundaries

Teach and reinforce appropriate boundaries, consent, personal space, and online safety in ways that are clear and understandable. Never assume someone automatically understands unwritten social rules.

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Work collaboratively with families and support networks

For children and some adults, parents, carers, support workers, and relevant professionals can provide valuable insight into communication styles, triggers, and effective support strategies while respecting confidentiality and autonomy.

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Ensure all staff receive training

Coaches, volunteers, officials, and welfare officers should understand neurodiversity, recognise potential vulnerabilities, and know how to make reasonable adjustments without being patronising or discriminatory.

Key Principle

Good safeguarding is not about treating neurodivergent people differently; it is about identifying and reducing barriers so they can participate safely, enjoy sport and have their rights, dignity and wellbeing protected.