

FA Guidance Notes

Adults playing with children whilst 'coaching' football!

The FA Handbook 2007- 2008, Rules of The Association and Laws of the Game

Age Ranges and Provisions Relating to Players Under 16 Years of Age, Page 76 (vii) (A) states:

A child in age ranges Under 7, Under 8, Under 9, Under 10, Under 11, Under 12, Under 13, Under 14, and Under 15 must not play and shall not be permitted, or encouraged to play, in a match where any other is older or younger by 2 years or more than that person (for disability football the two year age band may be varied at the discretion of The Association).

The FA rules prescribe two year age banding in the interests of child development in football. This provides parameters which allow children to develop alongside their peers who are of a similar physical development. Whilst it is acknowledged that there will be varying levels of development within any one age group this ruling prevents children being placed in potentially dangerous settings playing football with and against much larger children in matches.

The FA strongly advises against adults playing within youth football settings (U16) for similar reasons to those as detailed above. The disproportionate skill level and physical size presents the potential opportunity for injury to the children involved.

It is The FA's experience that adults playing games within youth football in either training settings or so named 'friendly matches' can result in injury. It should be noted that the injury of a player in such circumstances has in the past resulted in legal action being taken by the injured party against the offending player.

Whilst coaches may deem themselves to be 'aware' and skilful enough to avoid contact the risks of injury remain high. With the best of intentions; enthusiasm and effort on behalf of either party can and does result in physical contact. The FA coaching courses make it very clear that coaches are not to join in games when working with youth teams. Indeed such activity would be deemed in conflict with the coaches' code of conduct and leaves the coach open to potential claims against them.