

# CASE STUDY: YOUTH COACHING

*Feedback from a club in England*

- Read the guidelines, but also look to the spirit behind them. Where it may not be absolutely explicit what you can and cannot do, reading between the lines helps you understand how to minimise risk.
- Buy a lot of sanitiser and cones - they are really useful. Disposable gloves are not!
- Risk assessments help isolate areas that need attention. They help reduce risk though we cannot eliminate it.
- Don't be afraid to speak to children, parents and coaches about issues over distancing, sanitising or even face touching (some children do that a lot).
- Running any cricket sessions will probably increase the risk of infection compared to not doing so.
- We work not just to the guidelines, but also thinking about the most concerned parent, coach or child. We need to maintain their confidence that their welfare is paramount so we describe what the sessions will entail as far as we can.
- Running the sessions creates an enormous amount more administration than normal. For example, we were running 50-min sessions for five children at a time run by three coaches/assistant coaches with only three children "active" in the session at any time. Running 6 or 7 of these a day needs careful scheduling of children and coaches.
- Drills are even more carefully planned out to make sure we know where each coach and child will be. This is particularly important between drills and sessions or when the children are moving about.
- Every child has to have their own ball which we supplied and they bring to every session.
- Every child has their own kit which is not shared and ECB advice is that sharing kit is to be avoided, so theoretically is allowed though we do not do it.
- Every child has their own coned area that all their kit goes into and they return to between drills.
- Every child has their own hand sanitizer.
- Any kit that has been shared e.g. a catching mit, is sanitised between children.
- Children, coaches and parents are reminded repeatedly about 2m distancing. Children and some coaches find this unnatural and very difficult.
- Where a ball may be touched by more than one child/coach it is sanitised on a regular basis. We do not allow hard balls to be shared as soft balls are easier to sanitise.
- When you need an umpire or keeper these are coaches. It is very hard for a child to be a keeper and retain the 2-metre distance. Umpires are moving depending on the run up of the bowler to be in line but still 2-metre+ at all times. They are also standing further back. This is easier than you might imagine.
- We started using disposable gloves, but they give a false sense of hygiene and sanitiser and sanitiser spray is better.
- When more than one child is bowling in the net, they have a coned area to return to when waiting for their turn.
- Change it every week to keep it fresh. We have introduced super cricket Sunday competitions and match like scenarios to make sure it does not feel like practice.
- By building it up week by week the children have quickly been able to adjust to rules and restrictions.
- This week we are trying a four player a side tournament; one batsman, one bowler, three fielders and one wicket keeper/coach/umpire. Using a softball which will be sanitised at least every over if not more frequently, we believe we can do it safely. The players not batting will be occupied by an assistant coach in their coned areas to make sure they stay socially distanced. As we will have twelve in the session the team of four not in the match will be in the net with another coach.

## The Positives

This sounds like a lot of work, which it is, however the feedback is truly amazing. The children have never played so much cricket - I have now had to make it clear that we will not play cricket on

Wednesday but they are playing on all other days either in the nets, in organised practises or one to ones.

Feedback from the WhatsApp groups is very motivating. One parent's comment is indicative "cricket has been the absolute high point of Ned's week, it is his only organised outdoor activity and he loves it. He has a chance to go out and safely play with friends. He has not played so much sport in his entire life. You have been life savers." The positive impact on families' lives of this cannot be underestimated.

We now have a highly motivated and engaged group of parent helpers.

There is an excellent social side where parents share a bottle of wine while five children play in the net.

We have had to get organised. Sessions are better planned, parents are more informed and we are all far more connected.

All children attending all sessions arrive by foot or bicycle as all the children attending come from within a mile of the ground.

### **The Future**

If the numbers were increased from 6 in a group to 12, we could run meaningful junior softball 6 a side matches with very little increase in risk. The sooner we can move to that the better.