

## Tactile contact policy

Approved: 27 February 2019  
Reviewed: 1 September 2024  
Review due: 1 September 2025

### Purpose

YMCA East Surrey's main aim is to protect children and young people from risk or harm, but we are also keen to ensure that workers do not put themselves in a vulnerable position where their actions could be misinterpreted as inappropriate behaviour. The following guidelines have therefore been set up to ensure the safety of children and young people and to give staff more guidance on what is and isn't acceptable behaviour between YMCA East Surrey staff and children / young people.

### Responsibilities and monitoring

Monitor: Head of Children & Young People  
Approve: Board of Management  
Endorse: Children & Young People Advisory Group  
Propose: CEO  
Draft and review: CYP Quality and Insights Manager

### Policy and procedure

It is difficult to draw up prescriptive procedures governing tactile behaviour due to the wide range of physical contact and the variety of different circumstances that may arise in an out of school, sports or recreational setting.

However, physical contact in a professional setting at YMCA East Surrey is only acceptable in the following categories:

- ▶ Restraint – minimum restraint should only be used as a last resort when a child or young person is violent towards another person or is in danger of hurting themselves (see Behaviour management policy).
- ▶ Reassurance – a minimum level of contact is permissible to provide essential first aid or to comfort and reassure a child or young person who requires first aid or who is significantly emotionally upset.
- ▶ Support – physical support is acceptable when deemed necessary (e.g. due to a child's / young person's disability) or by qualified coaches in a sporting context, and in accordance with appropriate governing body's guidelines.

If it is necessary to use physical contact in one of the situations outlined above, then every effort must be made to ensure that it takes place in the full view of another adult. Physical contact should not take place between a child and a member of staff in private.

If a child or young person is being comforted or reassured the member of staff should ask permission before making physical contact.

When a child or young person initiates unacceptable physical contact (i.e. attempting to cuddle or sit on the lap of a member of staff), the member of staff should gently move away, taking extreme care to do so in a tactful way that will not lead to a feeling of rejection.

It is recognised that children and young people with disabilities/special needs may need extra support in certain activities. A child or young person with physical disabilities may need assistance in sporting/recreational activities which will involve physical contact. In order to include children and young people with disabilities in all activities a member of staff may assist in this way.

Holding hands with a child may be appropriate when guiding children across roads and into a YMCA East Surrey minibus/vehicle. It may also be necessary in a first aid context or with children under eight who are experiencing anxiety (e.g. a child who is new to out of school childcare).

The following behaviour would be considered unacceptable from a YMCA East Surrey member of staff in a professional setting:

- ▶ Any physical violence towards a child or young person
- ▶ Any physical disciplinary action towards a child / young person or smacking, even in fun
- ▶ Cuddling or hugging a child / young person (unless in a case of severe emotional distress)
- ▶ Play fighting or horse play between workers and children / young people
- ▶ Carrying children / young people, piggy backs, etc. (unless in a first aid context)
- ▶ Initiating holding hands with a child / young person where it is unnecessary, for instance in a safe indoors environment with a child / young person who is confident enough not to need such reassurance.