



WILTSHIRE CRICKET
LISTENING TO CHILDREN
– RATIONALE & SUPPORT



The biggest driver of activity for young people is enjoyment. We need to listen more to children and young people and involve them in decision making to create the type of experiences they want. In places where children's perspectives are valued and listened to, a more effective safeguarding culture is embedded. A culture of Listening to Children shapes cricketing activities and helps create opportunities that are more attractive and accessible. A listening culture gives confidence to children and young people to speak out when they may have a concern or are concerned about someone else. By embedding Listening to Children within Wiltshire Cricket, we develop and support young people to speak out about unsafe situations.

WHY SHOULD WE LISTEN TO CHILDREN?

Children as experts in their own lives

Young children are experts in their own lives, and it is important that they are regarded as important sources of information about their own lives – their feelings, thoughts, views, needs, interests and preferences are sought and inform the decisions that affect their engagement in sport.

Children as skilful communicators

Children may have different ways of communicating depending on a range of factors including their age, special educational needs, culture, interests and personality. This principle starts with the understanding that all children are viewed as able to communicate their experiences. Adults need to find ways of enabling all children to communicate in ways that is appropriate for individual children's needs and preferences.

Children as rights holders

This view of the child was upheld by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is an active view of children and childhood which sees children not only as those waiting to be adults but as people with rights now. These rights include the freedom of expression (Article 13) which acknowledges children's rights to be able to receive information and to express themselves 'either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.'

Children as meaning makers

This view of the child sees young children as active participants in their own learning. This acknowledges that young children need opportunities to 'think what they think' rather than seeing listening and consultations as a quick way to take children's ideas. Most children, in a similar way to adults will benefit from having different opportunities, using a range of resources to reflect on their views and experiences.

'Listening' in this context is defined as:

- An active process of receiving (hearing and observing), interpreting and responding to communication. It includes all the senses and emotions and is not limited to the spoken word.
- A necessary stage in ensuring the participation of all young children in matters that affect them, as well as parents and staff.
- An ongoing part of tuning in to all young children as individuals in their everyday lives.
- Sometimes part of a specific consultation about a particular entitlement, choice, event or opportunity.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY LISTENING?

Active Listening

What is active listening, and why is it important for coaches?

- Active listening is the process by which an individual secures information from another individual or group.
- It involves paying attention to the conversation, not interrupting, and taking the time to understand what the speaker is discussing. The “active” element involves taking steps to draw out details that might not otherwise be shared.
- Active listening is a helpful skill for any coach to develop. It helps you truly understand what people are saying in conversations (and not just what you want to hear, or think you hear).
- Active listening is a particularly useful tool to use during feedback sessions, since it can help you build positive rapport with players.

Active listeners avoid interrupting at all costs, summarize and repeat back what they have heard, and observe body language to give them an extra level of understanding.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF LISTENING TO CHILDREN TO COACHES, TEAM MANAGERS & THE WILTSHIRE CRICKET PATHWAY PLAYERS

Benefits for children and young people involved with Wiltshire Cricket

Young people are the lifeblood and future of sport, and having their voice heard will benefit everyone.

Here are some of the key benefits for young people:

- It provides unique opportunities for young people to give views, ideas, feedback and raise their own issues, worries or concerns
- It gives a chance to develop new skills, experience and confidence
- Helps them to feel valued and listened to
- More likely to feel comfortable to talk about concerns or worries with an adult within Wiltshire Cricket
- It helps them gain confidence by working within a group, becoming more connected with their peers and increasing their sense of belonging, team morale and loyalty
- The communication skills learnt will help them navigate challenging situations within Wiltshire Cricket in a more sensitive and appropriate manner

Benefits for Wiltshire Cricket

Here are some of the key benefits :

- Provides a space to hear concerns
- Promotes a child-focused approach, responsive to its core audience
- If young people feel valued and listen to they are more likely to report any concerns and stay in sport for longer
- It ensures that plans, projects and materials are appropriate and relevant to young people
- We can grow a valuable resource for consultation and involvement – in both the short and long term
- We will be proactively engaging with children and young people and meeting safeguarding responsibilities to listen to the voices of young people.

SUPPORT, HINTS, AND TIPS FOR COACHES

Active Listening

Techniques that can be used both within training sessions and in general conversation with players include:

- Building trust and establishing rapport
- Demonstrating concern
- Paraphrasing to show understanding
- Using nonverbal cues that show understanding such as nodding, eye contact, and leaning forward (see below)
- Brief verbal affirmations like “I see,” “I know,” “Sure,” “Thank you,” or “I understand”
- Asking open-ended questions (see below)
- Asking specific questions to seek clarification. (see below)
- Waiting to disclose your opinion
- Disclosing similar experiences to show empathy and understanding

Examples of Active Listening Responses

Here are some examples of statements and questions employed with active listening:

- Building trust and establishing rapport: “Tell me what I can do to help”, “I was really impressed with your awareness in the field today”
- Demonstrating concern: “I’m eager to help; I know you’re going through a run of low scores”, “I know how hard a change to bowling action can be. How are you feeling at this point?”
- Paraphrasing: “So, you’re saying that the uncertainty about who will be your coach next year is causing you concern”, “So, you think that we need to work on your grip, stance and backswing”
- Brief verbal affirmation: “I understand that you'd like more frequent feedback about your performance.” “Thank you. I appreciate your time in speaking to me.”

- Asking open-ended questions: "I can see that John's criticism was very upsetting to you. Which aspect of his critique was most disturbing?" "It's clear that the current situation is intolerable for you. What changes would you like to see?"
- Asking specific questions: "How long do you expect your injury to last", "What is your normal length of bowling run up"
- Waiting to disclose your opinion: "Tell me more about your field setting plans for the game ahead", "Can you let me know a little more about what you were working on with your club coach last week"
- Disclosing similar situations: "I was also nervous about returning from an injury after my finger break", "I had the responsibility of telling one of my players they were batting in a different position to normal when I was once a captain. Even if its necessary, it never gets easier"

QUESTION STARTERS – OPEN ENDED & FOR CLARIFICATION

Examples to encourage creative thinking, action and language could include variations of the following:

What do you notice about ...?

How are they different...?

What if ...?

Will you tell me about what you're doing...?

What do you think happens next?

Is there another way to...?

How could you find out...?..?

What have you enjoyed today / learnt?

What would you do...?

How did you...?

Can you do it differently...?

What do you think would happen if ...?

How are these alike...?

How do you think...?

Tell me about...?

What do you think will happen if you do this...?

What do you think comes next?

How do you know...?

Can you do it another way...?

What happened when you...?

What else could you use to make the...?

BODY LANGUAGE OF LISTENERS

– NON-VERBAL CUES

The strategic use of body language plays a key role in effective communication.

1. Look Like You're Listening

If you want young people to give you their ideas, don't multi-task while they do! Avoid the temptation to check your text messages, check your watch, or check out how the other participants are reacting. Instead, focus on those who are speaking by turning your head and torso to face them directly and by making eye contact. Leaning forward is another nonverbal way to show you're engaged and paying attention. It's important to listen to people — it's just as important to make sure that they know you are listening.

2. Use Your Head

To encourage a team member to expand on their comments, nod your head using clusters of three nods at regular intervals. People will talk much more than usual when the listener nods in this manner. Head tilting is another signal that you are interested, curious and involved. The head tilt is a universal gesture of giving the other person an ear.

3. Open Your Body

We reveal a lot about our attitudes, emotions and motives by the way we hold our bodies, especially when using closed or open postures.

In the ultimate closed body posture, arms are folded, legs are crossed and the torso or legs are turned away. Rounding the upper body and hiding hands are closed signals that may also represent feelings of vulnerability or depression.

In open and receptive body postures, legs are uncrossed, and arms are open with palms exposed or resting comfortably on the desk or conference table. If the arms are relaxed at the sides of the body while standing, this is also generally a sign of openness, accessibility, and an overall willingness to listen and interact.

To show that you are receptive to other people's ideas, uncross your arms and legs. Put your feet flat on the floor and use open palm gestures (which is a body language display inviting others into the conversation).

4. Remove Barriers

Physical obstructions are especially detrimental to looking open and receptive. Take away anything that blocks your view or forms a barrier between you and the rest of

the players. Even at a drinks break, be aware that you may create a barrier by holding your drinks bottle in a way that seems deliberately to block your body or distance you from others. People with their hands held at waist level are more comfortable than those with hands chest high.

5. Smile

A genuine smile not only stimulates your own sense of well-being, it also tells those around you that you are approachable, cooperative, and trustworthy. A genuine smile comes on slowly, crinkles the eyes, lights up the face, and fades away slowly. Most importantly, smiling directly influences how other people respond to you. When you smile at someone, they almost always smile in return. And, because facial expressions trigger corresponding feelings, the smile you get back actually changes that person's emotional state in a positive way.

6. Lean In

Leaning is another way your body indicates your emotions. Leaning backward usually signals feelings of dislike or negativity. It's a hardwired response from the limbic brain; we subconsciously try to distance ourselves from anything unpleasant or dangerous. In a seated conversation, leaning backward can also communicate dominance or disinterest.

Positive attitudes toward others tend to be accompanied by leaning forward – especially when sitting down. When two people like each other, you'll see them both lean in. Research also shows that individuals who lean forward tend to increase the verbal output of the person they're speaking with

7. Mirror Expressions and Postures

When a business colleague mirrors your body language, it's his or her way of non-verbally saying that they like or agree with you. When done with intent, mirroring can be an important part of listening (this time listening to what the other person's body is telling you). Mirroring starts by observing a person's facial and physical gestures and then subtly taking on the same expressions and postures.

Building positive coaching relationships takes more than inclusive body language and good listening skills. But don't underestimate the impact of these behaviours. They can either support or sabotage your efforts.

INTERRACTION WITH PLAYERS DURING SESSIONS

Direct instruction

Sometimes it is not appropriate to allow children to explore and discover when an adult can see that direct teaching is the most appropriate strategy. This can include teaching a skill or giving facts/information – or possibly correcting a child’s misconception, although often encouraging children to think through and explore their misconceptions can provide rich opportunities for learning.

Providing assistance

Children learn to choose and direct their own activities, but many will need assistance to develop their skills and confidence to express their own ideas, and share these with their peers.

Guided interaction

Adult and child collaborate on a task, where the adult’s strategies are highly tuned into the child’s existing skills and motivations. The adult uses a range of strategies that are responsive to the child’s intentions, focused on the spontaneous learning, and provide opportunities for the child’s feedback. Talking together is a primary tool, using open questions and exploring what the child is thinking about to help the child to go beyond what they understood before.

Say Thank You in Advance

Help your players make an appropriate choice by taking this leap of faith. Your pre-emptive “Thank you for listening while we go through this,” will encourage your players toward good behaviour much more than, “I better not see any chat when we are going through this!”

People, especially children, will usually try to live up to our expectations if we manage them in a positive way. Letting them know, in advance, that you trust them to do the right thing will cultivate open communication lines and increase the likelihood the task will get completed.

Ensure Comprehension

A simple way to ensure a player has heard you and that they understand is to ask them to repeat back what you said.

Studies have shown that 40-80% of the information doctors relay to patients is either forgotten completely or misunderstood (and keep in mind, these are adults, not children).

To combat this misunderstanding, doctors have begun using the teach-back method which calls on patients to “teach back” to the doctor what treatment instructions they were just given. This method has been shown to drastically increase information retention from patients.

The same tool can be used effectively with children. Once you’ve made eye contact, shortened your speech, and clearly explained what you need your child to do, calmly ask the player to repeat back what they’ve just heard.

Make an Observation

If you see a task that’s been left undone, don’t dive in with a big reprimand, just make an OBSERVATION: “I see you’re XXXXXXXX,” or you can ask, “What is your plan for XXXXXXXXXXXX today?”

“What is your plan for?” is a strong strategy to avoid power struggles. It’s empowering because it’s assumptive on your part that they have a plan—and gives your player an opportunity to save face and quickly come up with a plan in the moment if they didn’t already have one!

“Oh yeah! I was planning on XXXXXXXXXXXX.” This gives you the chance to put a positive empowerment spin on the whole conversation! “That’s awesome—I really appreciate that, buddy.”



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