

An international project aiming to support parents to support children involved in sport.



How can parents support their child's development within sport?

Parents are in a position to encourage children to engage in physical activity from a young age. Through enthusiasm for movement and sport you can support all aspects of your child's development.

There is a limit to what you can realistically hope to influence in relation to your child's sport development as it is influenced both by genetic, experiential, and environmental factors. Rather, as a parent it is important that you understand that development is a dynamic, complex, and non-linear process. At times your child may seem more capable than others, but they may simply be further through the developmental process or vice versa. Consequently, rather than focusing on how your child is doing compared to other children, it is more valuable if you focus on your individual's child's progress and support them to enjoy their experience, as this will keep them motivated to play and improve.

Some key principles for supporting your child's development

- Prioritise the development of basic motor/physical skills at an early age.
- Understand the basics of development and recognise how your child's developmental age may be impacting (positively or negatively) on their sporting performance.
- Focus on your child's progress, paying particular attention to long-term development rather than short-term improvements.
- Role model the types of behaviours you would like to see from your child as you will largely shape their psycho-social development.
- As a parent, also pay attention to the way coaches operate and train to see if they are accounting for development. For instance:
 - Does the coach create a positive and safe climate? How does he/she communicate? Is it appropriate for your child's cognitive development?
 - Does the coach take the physical and cognitive development of young people into account. For example, do the chosen exercises match the age group he/she trains; no rigid one size fits all approach?
 - Does the coach pay attention to the emotions or psychological state of the young people? Does he/she have an interest in them?
 - Does the coach keep track of developmental and performance markers to guide planning and inform practice?