



# Key points for the protection and proper treatment of children in sports

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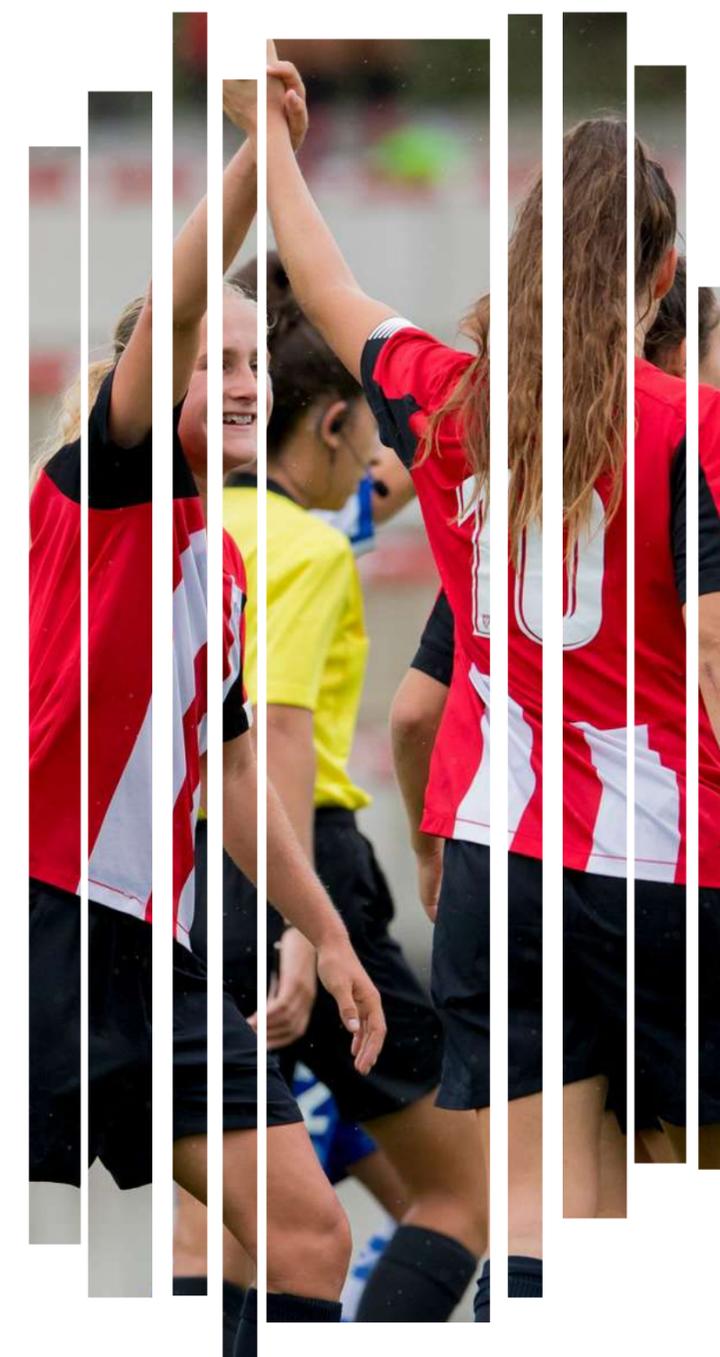
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# Key points for the protection and proper treatment of children in sports

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1. The importance of sports for children.
2. Children as subjects of law.
3. Current context and false beliefs.
4. Violence.
5. Proper treatment.
6. Protection and culture of protection in sports.
7. Awareness.
8. Responsibility and commitment.
9. Legal obligation.
10. Preventing violence against children in sport.
11. Child protection officers.
12. Translating language.
13. All-round well-being of children practising sports.
14. Families and sports.
15. Children's Participation.





**"Sport is a fundamental tool for the *integral development of childhood*, which must be a space of well-being, joy, happiness and freedom"**

# The importance of sports for children





**The third space where children spend the most time**, along with family and education.

It is essential that we value the importance of sports as an area where children must be protected.

**Sport should be a space for well-being, joy, happiness and freedom** for children. It must never be forgotten that children play sports to:

- Have fun.
- Be entertained.
- Make friends.
- Improve their sporting skills.
- Have an exciting time.
- Try to win.

**"Sport is a fundamental tool for the *integral development of childhood*, which must be a space of well-being, joy, happiness and freedom"**

**Sport, used properly, has positive effects:**

- Health: prevents illnesses and promotes healthy habits.
- Psychological: promotes self-esteem, is a space for eliminating stress.
- Physical: strengthens muscles and bones.
- Relational: generates bonds with other people, strengthens the feeling of belonging to a group
- Internalisation of values: sport promotes the values of respect, effort, sacrifice, and responsibility.

**Sport is a fundamental tool** for the all-round development of children.

Like any tool, it can be used properly or improperly.

The public institutions governing sports, sports institutions, clubs, sports leaders, and adults involved with children in their sports practise, have the responsibility of using this tool correctly.



2

*"Boys and girls are **subjects of law**, with their rights and obligations, and must always apply their **Higher Interest**, also in sport"*

# Children as subjects of law

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2

Children are **SUBJECTS OF LAW.**

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 1: "A child is understood to be every human being, from birth to 18 years of age."

All boys and girls have the right to practise sports in a healthy and protected environment, where their well-being is prioritised.

Children are viewed exclusively as a group with needs which must be covered and be subject to protection.

However, children are subjects of law: they have their rights and their obligations.

**This also applies in their sporting practise.**

**Children being subject of law implies that:**

- Children have access to their rights according to their age and level of maturity.
- Children's capacity and autonomy is progressive.
- The Best Interest of the Child must always be applied.
- They have the right to participate and express their opinion on matters that affect them.

**This also applies in sports.**

**"Boys and girls are subjects of law, with their rights and obligations, and must always apply their Higher Interest, also in sport"**

**The Best Interest of the Child:** Included in article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In short:

- "Ensure the child **such protection and care** as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for them." (here, we can also include coaches and sports professionals).
- "The institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities" (here, we can include sports entities and sports clubs).



3

*"Many situations of **violence** remain **normalized or invisible**. Sport must assume its **responsibility** for the **care, protection and integral development** of children"*

# Current context and false beliefs

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3

Sport must take a very decisive step forward in terms of child protection and proper treatment.

Sport has not accepted its responsibility for the comprehensive care and development of children practising sports.

Children are viewed exclusively as athletes when practising sports.

Many situations of violence against children are still normalised in the day-to-day world of sports.

Manifestations of violence are not solely the most serious cases. There is violence disguised as jokes, as humorous comments, as “being part of the team.”

The phrase “it’s always been done this way” must be eradicated from the world of children’s sports. Things can be done in a different way, protecting and respecting children’s rights.

The phrase “nothing bad has ever happened” must be eradicated from the world of sport. Violence takes place in invisible spaces, and therefore cannot be seen. In addition, the adults involved in sports practise do not have the tools for detecting, preventing, and acting against violence.

“Many situations of violence remain normalized or invisible. Sport must assume its responsibility for the care, protection and integral development of children”

The sole and fundamental goal is for children to improve their sports skills. This being important is not incompatible with the proper treatment and protection of children.

All children who play sports have other areas of development in their lives, which are very relevant, and which make them well-rounded people: education, family, friends, partners, problems, dreams, and hopes.

Viewing them exclusively as “athletes” makes us adults involved in sports, “forget” to pay attention to, take care of, and to work on those other areas.

## Current context and false beliefs



4

*"No violent behavior can be tolerated, as it has a **current and future impact** on the sufferer. Sport must have a **Plan to detect, educate, train and prevent risks**"*

# Violence

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4

Public institutions, sports entities, coaches and adults involved in children's sports **must guarantee their protection against any type of violence** that might affect them.

**No violent behaviour** can be tolerated.

Any situation of violence or lack of protection has a **current and future impact** on the people who suffer from them.

**"No violent behavior can be tolerated, as it has a current and future impact on the sufferer. Sport must have a Plan to detect, educate, train and prevent risks"**

#### **Violent behaviour means:**

- Damage caused by an action or an omission.
- Damage caused by a person, a group of people, an organisation, or an institution, inflicted on a child or an adolescent.
- These have a significant impact on the child it is inflicted on.
- The existence of a power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim. There is no one single profile of a child who is the victim.
- There is also no one single profile of the person who perpetrates it.
- Violence can manifest itself physically, psychologically, sexually, emotionally, or institutionally.

We consider that **all violence is preventable**.

There are factors which can help prevent situations of violence and vulnerability.

**Detecting, educating, training and prevent** risks, with concrete actions as part of a PLAN, preventing violence against children in sport.

**We must always respond appropriately** to any suspicion, doubt or complaint, made by a child to their family. **We must not look the other way.**

Institutional interests must not be put before the personal welfare of any child, or any child victim, of any lack of protection.



5

*“Children must find in sport a **context of support, protection and good treatment** that is a source of happiness, joy and safety”*

# Proper treatment

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5

The fundamental objectives of treating children properly in children's sports are:

- Promoting well-being.
- Making child athletes feel that they are in a safe space.
- Making child athletes feel that they are in a protective space.
- Making child athletes feel that they are listened to and respected.

*“Children must find in sport a **context of support, protection and good treatment that is a source of happiness, joy and safety**”*

Sports **must be a fundamental tool for children** practising them, in order to achieve all-round development:

- Physical
- Psychological
- Affective-sexual
- Social
- Group
- Emotional

Proper treatment in children's sports means:

- Taking care
- Protecting
- Giving affection
- Supporting
- Listening
- Being empathetic

Children practising sports must find:

- An environment of **support, protection and proper treatment.**
- A space with **sports personnel who protect them and treat them well.**
- A space that **generates happiness, joy,** and becomes a source of security.



6

*"It is necessary **to change the culture in a comprehensive way** with regard to the protection and good treatment of children, and to this end **all actors**, institutions and people around sport for children must be **involved**"*

# Protection and culture of protection in sports



6

In the world of childhood sports there has been a “culture” which has not been protective.

The work of protection and proper treatment of children in sports has the **fundamental aim of changing that culture.**

**Changing the “culture” means a comprehensive change.** Not just a partial or formal change.

Protecting children and treating them well in sports is **EVERYONE’S responsibility.**

To generate this culture of protection and proper treatment, **all agents, institutions, and people involved in children’s sports must participate.**

The first step continues to be to **making visible the need to work** on child protection and proper treatment in sports.

It is very important that we **raise awareness and understanding** of what this work is all about.

Finally, we must **commit and hold ourselves accountable.**

***“It is necessary to change the culture in a comprehensive way with regard to the protection and good treatment of children, and to this end all actors, institutions and people around sport for children must be involved”***

The word “**Safeguarding**” defines the generation of a culture of protection and proper treatment of children on an all-round basis.

The word “**Protection**” defines protective actions that are taken regarding a child who has been exposed to a situation of vulnerability or violence.

We must work to **generate a culture of protection and proper treatment.**



7

"100% of the **adults** around sports practice should be aware of their **educational, referent and protective role**, putting the child, their **rights and well-being at the center**"

**Awareness**



**In addition to awareness, professionals must have:**

- Tools.
- Knowledge.
- Support.
- Internal references within the entity.
- External references outside of the entity.

**We are much more than simply coaches, monitors, or managers.**

**100% of the adults involved in sports must be aware** that their role is far more extensive than simply teaching sports skills.

We must be aware of our roles as educators, reference figures, and guardians.

**"100% of the *adults* around sports practice should be aware of their *educational, referent and protective role*, putting the child, their *rights and well-being at the center*"**

All agents in sports, being aware, **have a much wider overview and ability to see and attend to all the needs** of children who practise sports.

This awareness **activates a mental "chip"** that alerts, prevents, and makes the professional take care of everything regarding the well-being of children practising sports.

**Being aware means, and helps us to:**

- Not look the other way when faced with any doubts, suspicions or concerns expressed by a child.
- Put children and their well-being at the centre of things.
- Avoid and preventing behaviours that might put a child at risk.
- Guarantee the rights of children practising sports.



8

"Committing *ethically and legally* to child protection and good treatment is *an obligation for institutions, clubs and people* around sports practice"

# Responsibility and commitment



8

Being aware and taking responsibility ultimately means making a **commitment**.

A **commitment to the protection and proper treatment** of children in sport means an **obligation** for institutions, clubs and individuals

**This commitment is twofold:**

- **Ethical:** this is determined by being conscientious and responsible.
- **Legal:** this is determined by a legal obligation.

***"Committing ethically and legally to child protection and good treatment is an obligation for institutions, clubs and people around sports practice"***



All agents involved in children's sports must **take RESPONSIBILITY**. When we take responsibility, **we promote the common good of the group** that we are managing in sports and the individual rights of every child.

In the world of children's sports, responsibility must mean that **we take care of each other, in order to promote sporting, personal and relational development**.

**If we don't take responsibility**, our behaviour could have a **negative impact** on children's development.

**Public Administrations and sports institutions (public and private), must be aware of** and accept their responsibility in this matter.

Said Public Administrations and sports institutions (public and private), **must DEMAND this responsibility** from all professionals who involved in children's sports.

**The commitment that we must all make** in the world of children's sports is fundamentally aimed at:

- Promoting well-being.
- Turning the sporting experience into beneficial one for the overall development of children.
- Combining sporting and competitive improvement, with personal, emotional and relational well-being.
- Respecting children's rights in practising sports.



9

**"The Children's Laws, Public Administrations, Federations, Clubs and Sports Entities should include in their Sports Plans the Protection and Good Treatment of Children, with *specific protocols, training and direct responsibility*"**

# Legal obligation

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9

### Public Administrations governing children's sports:

- These must take responsibility for protecting children practising sports.
- Explicitly include it in their Sports Plans.
- Require it from sporting entities.
- Facilitate and support entities, Federations, clubs, and personnel, with suitable advice and training.

*"The **Children's Laws, Public Administrations, Federations, Clubs and Sports Entities** should include in their Sports Plans the Protection and Good Treatment of Children, with **specific protocols, training and direct responsibility**"*

### Federations:

- Have plans for the protection and proper treatment of children.
- Have a Child Protection Officer.
- Demand that this is addressed by clubs in their sport.
- Include compulsory training for coaches in their sport in those educational initiatives managed by them.
- Have action protocols.
- Facilitate advice, support and training to clubs.

### Child Protection Laws:

- These must include **specific sections** referring to children's rights, and their protection and proper treatment in sports.
- They must **detail the concrete action framework** for respecting children's rights in the world of sport.
- They must require a **minimum level of training** in this subject for professionals/volunteers involved in children's sports.

### Sports clubs and entities:

- Have plans for the protection and proper treatment of children.
- Have a Child Protection Officer.
- Demand that this is addressed internally by all the personnel and departments of their entity.
- Facilitate internal and external training for Coaches.
- Have action protocols.

## Legal obligation



10

*“All persons/actors around sport with children should have **appropriate training and tools** to **prevent, detect and act** in situations of violence”*

# Preventing violence against children in sport



10

### Preventing:

- All violence against children can be prevented. This also includes sports.
- All violence against children must be sought to be prevented. This also includes sports.
- To prevent violence, we must work comprehensively on a series of elements. If we only focus our efforts on one of them, we will not be able to protect and treat children properly.

### Acting

- We must **respond appropriately** as people, professionals, institutions or entities, when a situation of vulnerability or violence becomes apparent.
- **Guaranteeing the well-being of children** who have suffered from a lack of protection comes first.
- **Any suspicions, doubts or complaints must be resolved in a suitable manner.** And always from a standpoint of children's rights.

***"All persons/actors around sport with children should have appropriate training and tools to prevent, detect and act in situations of violence"***

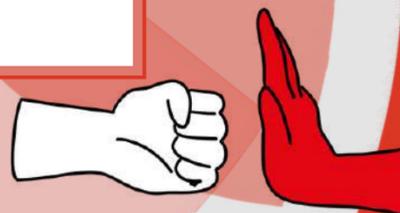


### Training

- **Training is essential for preventing violence**, but also for detecting it and acting against it.
- All personnel/agents involved in children's sports are **obliged to have a minimum of training** in child protection and proper treatment.
- This training must be:
  - **Generic:** the minimum concepts of the protection and proper treatment of children.
  - **Specific:** practical tools for each person, according to their scope of action: coaches, medical services, sports management, and communications.
  - **Supporting:** requirement to support professionals in their process of taking responsibility in terms of child protection and proper treatment.

### Detecting

- Sports are a space where **situations of violence against children can occur.**
- Sports are also a space where children practising them **can verbalise situations of violence which they are suffering from in other areas.**
- In addition to being aware, responsible and committed, sports professionals must have **the necessary tools** for detecting, suspecting or intuitively sensing situations of violence which children may be suffering from.



11

*"The **person responsible for the protection and good treatment of children** should lead the progressive implementation of the policy of Protection and good treatment, **train, accompany, be referent and manage cases**"*

# Child protection officers



**"The *person responsible for the protection and good treatment of children* should lead the progressive implementation of the policy of Protection and good treatment, *train, accompany, be referent and manage cases*"**

11

**All entities must** have a person who is responsible for the protection and proper treatment of children.

Their existence must not merely be formal: it must not be a case of appointing "anyone" who was already at the Club, with other roles, and without any **training or concern for the matter**, simply to comply with the law.

This person must be trained in everything involved by the production of a Protection and Proper Treatment Policy. They must also work on **its gradual implementation at the Club or sports entity.**

**Be a point of reference for everyone:**

- **Advising and supporting** all Departments and personnel of the entity.
- **Providing security for any person at the sports entity.**
- **Serving as a point of reference** for families in any situation, internal or external to the entity, which may arise.

**Leading the work of protection and proper treatment means:**

- **Establishing the fundamental lines** of the entity's child protection policy.
- **Disseminating the child protection policy** to all the departments and personnel of the entity.
- **Participating in, leading, or piloting the initial analysis** of the entity's situation.

**In addition, they must:**

- **Facilitate/Carry out all necessary training** so that all personnel have the necessary information in order to be able to apply the policy in their day to day responsibilities relating to children.
- **Participate in the process of dealing with complaints and suspicions, and their resolution.**
- **Accessing and managing incident information.**
- **Proposing measures or sanctions** for the decision taken by the General Management of the entity.

**Child protection officers**



12

"There is a great distance between the **language** used in the field of **children's rights and sports**, and the **challenge** is to **translate** the language of child protection into daily sports practice"

# Translating language



12

Sports professionals who work with children on a daily basis must **have all the tools for guaranteeing children's rights.**

These tools must be translated into the **language of sports.**

*"There is a great distance between the **language** used in the field of **children's rights and sports**, and the **challenge** is to **translate** the language of child protection into daily sports practice"*

### Different languages

- There is a very specific type of language used in the **International Conventions on Children's Rights**, Children's Laws, and Decrees.
- **The language used in the world of sports also has its own characteristics.** It is an eminently simple and clear language.
- There is a lot of distance between the two languages.

The fundamental challenge is about **the translation** of these languages.

We must **translate the language of child protection into daily sporting practise.**

### Prejudices:

- Not only is there a lot of distance between the two languages.
- **There is also a distance between the professionals in one field, and those in the other.** Those people working in the protection of children at Academies, Universities, Institutions, and international organisations, are usually rather distant from daily sporting practise, and vice versa.
- **Prejudices continue to exist, and the other side is not "recognised" as part of "our" world.**



13

*"The **fundamental objective** of sports practice at early ages is the **overall development and well-being** of children, including **physical, psychological and emotional well-being**"*

# All-round well-being of children practising sports



13

*"The **fundamental objective** of sports practice at early ages is the **overall development and well-being** of children, including **physical, psychological and emotional well-being**"*

The all-round development and all-round well-being of children is the fundamental objective of practising sports at an early age.

**Paying attention exclusively to their sporting development is a limited and partial objective.** Moreover, sporting performance and development is interconnected with the attention paid to the other areas necessary for children.

### Physical well-being

- Guaranteeing suitable sports facilities.
- Guaranteeing a safe and protected changing room area.
- Safe routes to and from sporting facilities.
- Appropriate hours according to age groups.
- Suitable medical attention in case of injury.
- Paying attention to excessive demands and overexertion.

### Psychological well-being:

- Suitable level of concern for the psychological aspect.
- Managing expectations.
- Coping with frustration.
- Stress management.
- Access to experts, within, or outside of the Club.

### Emotional well-being:

- Providing spaces for the expression of emotions by children.
- **Facilitating the expression of emotions, without prejudice or limits,** for the children expressing them.
- Training in identifying emotions for professionals at the Club or entity.

## All-round well-being of children practising sports



14

*"Families are **references** for children, so they must **support, accompany, respect and be involved** in the **welfare** of their sons and daughters in sports practice"*



# Families and sports





14

**"Families are references for children, so they must support, accompany, respect and be involved in the welfare of their sons and daughters in sports practice"**

#### During sports practise:

- We must **support, accompany, advise, and feel that we are a support for children.**
- Our attitude during competitions **must be respectful** towards them, their teammates, their rivals, their coach, and the referee.
- **We are points of reference for them**, and even if they do not say so, they might be ashamed of our behaviour.

#### Relationships with coaches:

- **Coaches and families must maintain a fluid communication channel**, whose ultimate goal is the well-being of the child practising sports.
- **The objective of communication must not be exclusively about sports.** Communication must be focused on the well-being of the children practising sports.

#### Choice and access:

- Families must **respect the decision of their children** when choosing the sport that they want to practise.
- In this process, we must **advise, and explain arguments about what we believe**, but never impose our views.
- **Imposing a sport on a child is a failure in the short, medium and long term.**

#### Relationship with clubs:

- Families must start demanding that Clubs exercise **concern for the well-being** of our children, beyond the practise of sports.
- Families, in addition to the level or category in which their child is going to play, should also be concerned about the **interest of each entity in dealing with the work of protection and proper treatment.**



15

"Child participation is a **guiding principle** of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its implementation is a **challenge**. An **active, empathetic and respectful listening space** must be available"

# Children's Participation





15

Children's sports are a space where, historically, children **receive numerous instructions, in the form of orders.**

Children's participation is not only a child's right: it's also a **guiding principle of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.**

The biggest challenge is in its practical application. **How do we actually facilitate children's participation?**

One of the components of proper treatment in sports must be the establishment of **respectful, fluid, and empathetic communications between responsible adults and child athletes.**

Children who play sports have **the right to be heard and to express their opinions, completely freely.** The opinions of children who play sports must be taken into account.

## Children's Participation

**"Child participation is a *guiding principle* of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its implementation is a *challenge*. An *active, empathetic and respectful listening space* must be available"**

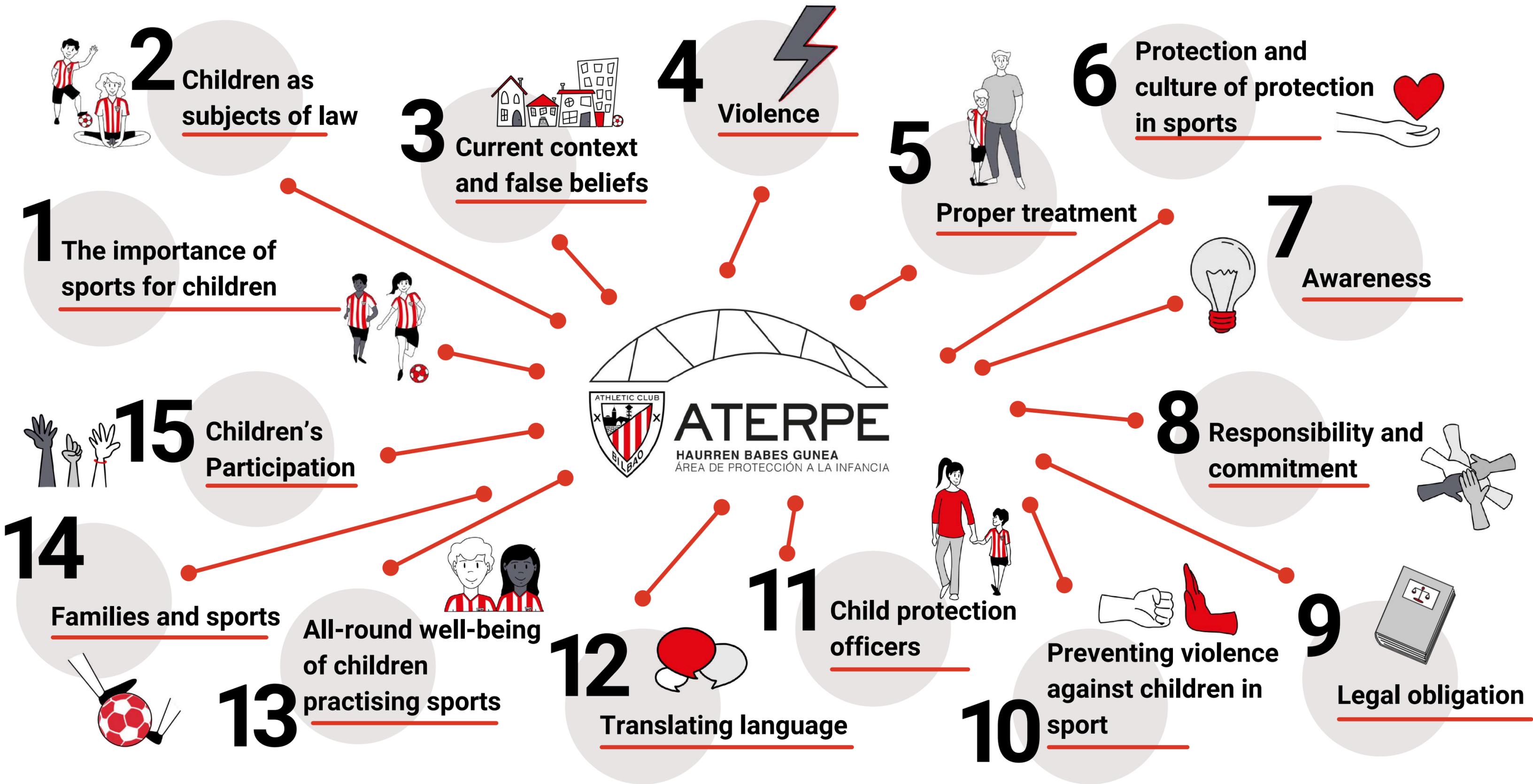
**Genuine participation** in the decisions which affect them in the world of sports, aims to involve the children who practise sports in making the decisions that affect their well-being.

Any problems, doubts, or comments, regarding sports and non-sports, that a child **wants to make, must be suitably addressed.**

The fundamental thing is to have a space for **active, empathetic, and respectful listening.** Likewise, to respond in the same manner.

- **Participation is not preached: it is practised.**
- The right to participate and to be heard in the field of sports must be adapted to the level of development and maturity of the children we are working with.
- Participation is not learned, it is experienced. Therefore, **it must be developed from the earliest ages,** and be the norm in the internal processes of teams.





**Key points for the protection and proper treatment of children in sports**




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