



Consulting With Young People

Young People haven't fully developed their communication skills so they can't always put their feelings into words. In addition, they may not feel comfortable speaking their minds within the rugby club environment. In order for them to stay involved in club activities and become fully integrated as members of the club you will need to consult appropriately with them about the activities you provide, so that you can provide activities suitable to their needs. They need to be as comfortable as possible to get the most out of participating. This does not mean that you will 'do' everything they ask but rather that you will adopt some activities to suit the needs of the group. It's important not to disregard their input because if you only provide what you think they need then the age-grade section will not develop, young people will not stay in a club that is not providing an enjoyable experience.

Because communication involves not only the words we choose but also how those words are said and also our body language, young people have to watch, listen and receive a lot of information from adults in order to have a conversation. Young people get very little opportunity to put their thoughts and feelings forward and they may lack confidence to be really able to tell you how they feel about their rugby experience. You will need to actively listen in order to gain a greater understanding of their perception of the rugby club environment.

Some ways of getting young people's feedback:

- Use quantitative and qualitative feedback, (surveys and interviews)
- Explain what it is you want to find out and what you will do with the information, e.g. "the committee would like to find out what are your favourite activities in order to make a suitable diary of age grade events for next season"
- Have as many young people involved as possible, good players, shy players, players with a disability, etc.
- Have a combination of group discussions and individual feedback
- Act on feedback, although you may not be able to grant all wishes be sure to take some steps to acknowledge the feedback, e.g. you won't be able to change anything when they tell you they don't like playing rugby in the rain but you may be able to do something about the end of season activity that they would like to take part in
- Always have ground rules before starting out on a consultation with juniors

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Some suggested methods:

- Suggestion Box in the locker rooms and/or near the pitches (where appropriate)
- Have a list of statements on sheet, leave in locker rooms / notice boards – players take one, fill it in at home by ticking statement they agree with and then they return to closed box by specific date – statements on the sheet could include, “I like coming to this club”, “I have friends here”, “I think the rules are fair here”
- For young players you could have picture type sheet, with a selection of smiley faces on it, some happy, some sad and they circle how they feel
- Players use their mobile phones in groups to take pictures of things they like around the club, things they don't like, things they'd like to change etc.
- Focus groups after training/matches, groups of same age, same ability, etc. – discussions to find out how they are experiencing rugby in this club

For more information please visit our Youth Council Section [here](#)

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