

## Concussion guidelines for education settings

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### **'If in doubt, sit them out' – Make concussion guidelines for education settings part of whole-school plans**

Being active is a central part of a child's emotional, social and physical development. Children should be able to play safely in educational settings and the vast majority do. However, with incidents of concussion in sport hitting the headlines, many professionals and parents may be worried about children taking part in sport.

In response to this, the sports sector and Government came together to create the Forum on Concussion in Sport and Physical Education. The Forum aims to raise awareness of the issue and support professionals, students, parents and volunteers to be better equipped to deal with concussion incidents. Its first step was to produce *Concussion guidelines for education settings*.

### **Concussion guidelines for education settings**

Children gain many health, psychological and social benefits from playing a range of sports including contact sports. For many, contact sports are their preferred and main form of physical activity and health risks associated with inactivity far outweigh the risks of concussion. It is important to reiterate concussion is also a risk not only in sport but in everyday life. The crucial thing is that incidents of concussion are handled correctly.

The Forum recognised that more support is needed for professionals working in schools and colleges to deal with incidents of concussion. So it worked collaboratively with medical experts to produce guidelines tailored to educational environments.

When thinking of concussion, you may immediately think of PE and sport sessions at school however, it can also occur during almost physical activity, play and travel to or from school. So it is important that all professionals working in education are aware of the guidelines.

The guidelines set out the importance of good management of concussion, how to recognise it, how to respond to it and how to ensure a child or young person returns safely to their education and sport.

They also provide recommended rest periods to allow for recovery, as with any other injury, followed by a graduated return to play process which slowly and safely introduces the child back to not only sport but also education.

#### **Principles of concussion management:**

**RECOGNISE – REMOVE – RECOVER – RETURN**

The guidelines are for professionals working with children and young people aged 18 or under but they could be applied to over 18s in the absence of other advice. Parents might also find the guidelines useful as they have a key role to play in the health of their child, and making sure their child is looked after properly.

## **What can school governors do?**

Schools will have protocols and procedures for head injuries but specific guidance on concussion has been lacking. As a Governor you can check what procedures are in place in your school. If more focus on handling concussion is needed, these guidelines will be useful to you and they are designed to sit within existing policies to ensure there is a whole-school approach. Of course it is more than just about having the procedures in place, you also need to be confident that they are integrated, understood and promoted within the school.

## **Who is on the Forum?**

Members include the Rugby Football Union, the Football Association, England and Wales Cricket Board, England Hockey, Rugby League, Association of Physical Education, Youth Sports Trust and Sport England, as well as representatives from government departments – Department for Education, Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Department of Health.

The guidelines are not only supported by the majority of large national governing bodies of sport but they are also approved by a panel of independent medical experts, as well as the Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine, the Royal College of Emergency Medicine and the Society of British Neurological Surgeons.

## **What are the guidelines based on?**

The guidelines are based on existing good practice around concussion including the Zurich Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport and tools such as the Sport Concussion Assessment Tool.

## **What people are saying about the guidelines:**

Emma Boggis, Chief Executive of the Sport and Recreation Alliance and Chair of the Forum said: “Concussion must be taken extremely seriously to safeguard the long-term health and welfare of children, young people and adults. The guidelines are based on a shared desire to help people identify and appropriately respond to incidents of concussion and we hope they will be welcomed and, importantly, acted upon.”

A Government spokesperson said: “Nothing is more important than keeping our children safe – and we trust teachers and coaches to provide a safe environment for their pupils on the sports field. We welcome these concussion guidelines for education settings which will be a valuable resource for schools and sports clubs.”

Mike England Community Rugby Medical Director, Rugby Football Union “This has been a ground breaking initiative, with sport, education and health coming together to address a very important issue. We hope teachers will find these guidelines useful, as it is imperative that those working in the education sector know how to recognise concussion and take action. If I had pick out one key message it would be – if in doubt sit them out.”

## **Where can you find out more?**

On the Sport and Recreation Alliance website:  
[www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/concussion-guidelines](http://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/concussion-guidelines)

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*[This article is especially timely given the recent discussions concerning tackling in school rugby football]*