

The ECB has had several recent requests to clarify the recently issued ECB guidelines on junior players in open age cricket. The intention of the merger of previous guidance documents was to clarify this area for clubs and leagues to assist them with planning and fulfilling fixtures.

For purposes of ECB communications a guideline is as it implies - guidance based upon considered advice and consultation. ECB as the National Governing Body (NGB) advises cricket clubs and leagues via County Boards of current best practice which may be relied upon by insurers to assess the relative responsibilities should a claim be made. In this case ECB as the NGB are advising that a legal duty of care towards children is incumbent on those designated as responsible adults in relation to those children.

As specified in the guidelines, all clubs must recognise that they have a duty of care towards all young players aged under 18 who are representing the club. This duty of care also extends to leagues that allow the participation of young players in open age groups in their league. The duty of care should be interpreted in two ways:

- Not to place a young player in a position that involves an unreasonable risk to that young player, taking account of the circumstances of the match and the relative skills of the player.
- Not to create a situation that places members of the opposing side in a position whereby they cannot play cricket as they would normally do against adult players.

In addition the guidelines note the need for clubs and leagues to recognise the positive experience that young players should have in open age cricket and thus clubs should provide an opportunity for players to show their talents in an appropriate way. Children who are just used as fielders will not fully experience the game.

The guidelines are designed to help clubs to decide when to select young players in **open age competitive** cricket and how best to help their cricketing development when they play within open age groups. For example:

Under 12 age group players* and younger should not play in open age competitive cricket.

Under 13 age group players* can play in open age group competitive cricket, (i.e. players aged 12 and over) if considered by a qualified Level 2 coach or above that it is appropriate for their development.

Under 13 players will need prior explicit written parental consent to play as this recognises the need for parents or guardians to be aware of the significance of allowing their young child to participate in open age competitive cricket rather than purely junior cricket.

Over 13 year old players are free to play open age cricket.

* Junior cricket age groups are set by the age of the player on the 31st August preceding the season of play.